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The Magazine of Science-Fiction Gaming

Game Designers' Workshop

70

20th Anniversary

GDW

1973 - 1993

TWILIGHT: 2000™
Goodrich Hill
Thomas E. Mulkey

SPACE: 1889™
Treasure of Melas
James L. Cambias

STAR WARS®
Bantha Cannon
Chris Hind

plus—
MEGA TRAVELLER®
DARK CONSPIRACY™
SHADOWRUN™
CYBERPUNK®
CTHULHU™
BATTLETECH®
and More

GDW

Rockin' thé House...!

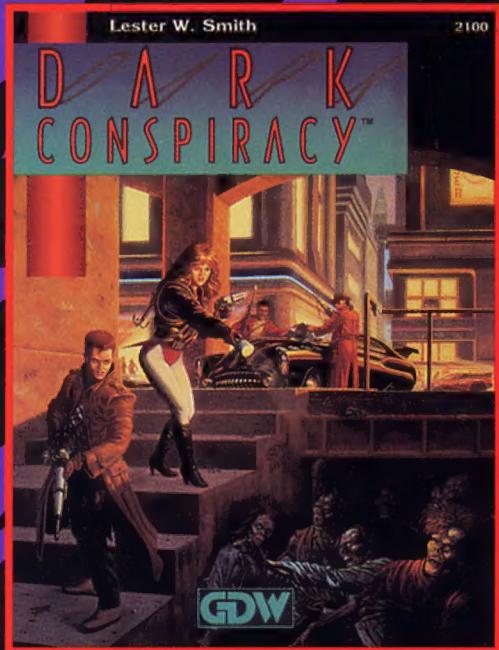
Imagine three distinct worlds, all of which you can immediately feel at home in. With **GDW's House System**, **Twilight: 2000™** (and its alternate campaign, **Merc: 2000™**), **Dark Conspiracy™**, and **Traveller® The New Era** are all under the same roof: If you know the rules for any one of these RPGs, you can play them all. Yet they all have their own unique flavor, set in vastly different milieus.

TRAVELLER: THE NEW ERA

An infinite universe to explore! The Imperium, Humaniti's most glorious regime, fell 70 years ago. Its vast area is ready to re-awaken and is yours for the taking. What's new you ask? You've got self-aware robots, clones, artificially intelligent starships, and an empire to re-build.

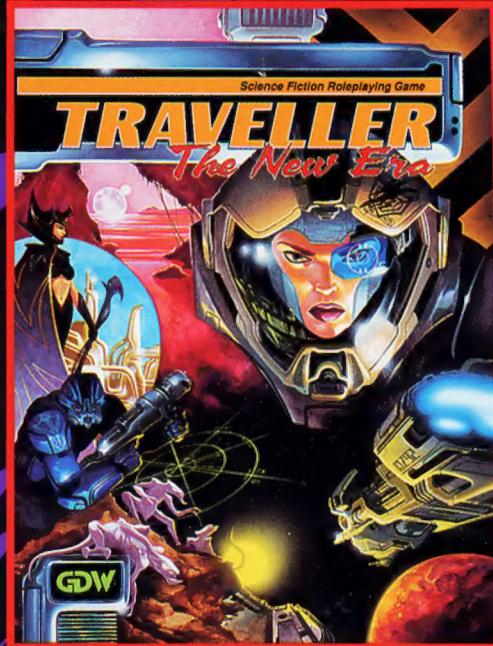
But **Traveller the New Era**'s rules set is not limited to a specific campaign background. Instead it sets you free to experiment with different styles of play, different techniques, and different universes.

The oldest science-fiction roleplaying game is once again the best. **Traveller** is back!! **GDW: 0300**



DARK CONSPIRACY

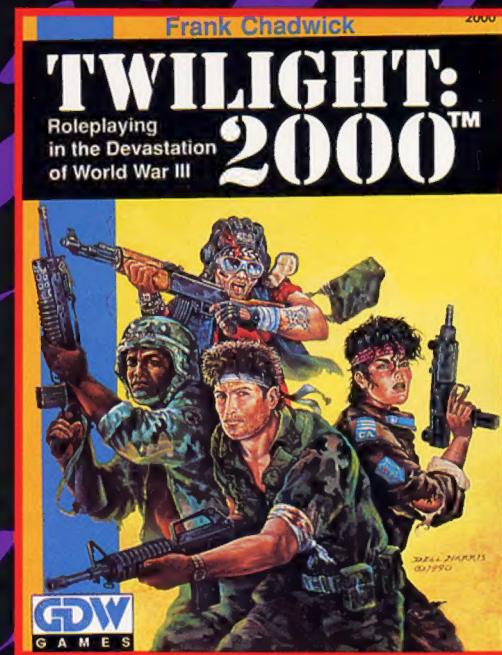
When an ancient, brooding evil is released from its dimensional prison, humanity's worst nightmares come to life. What is the link between this eldritch, lurking horror and the alien visitors from another star system? Set in the near future, the world of **Dark Conspiracy** is fraught with peril and challenge. Can you turn back the forces of darkness? **GDW: 2100**



TWILIGHT: 2000

The nuclear warheads finally flew—now what? Chaos reigns. Your last orders from command were, "Good luck, you're on your own!"

Twilight: 2000 takes you into the devastation of WWIII. Battle warlords and legions of marauders bent on dominating the survivors of the bomb. Search for whatever technology can get you through the night. Or just try to get home. **GDW: 2000**



...the GDW House System.

Send for a free catalog. **GDW, PO Box 1646, Bloomington, IL 61702-1646.**

The Magic Primer

Lesson 1: Anatomy of the Card

Name of Card: Each card has a unique name which is used to identify it in gaming and collecting circles.

Illustration: High quality color art from over two dozen artists nationwide. Each artist's style broadens the set's diversity without destroying the overall unity of the series.

Card Type: Cards are grouped by color for easy identification during play.

Card Description: Provides special rules for each card, or adds descriptive elements to enhance game play.



The minotaurs of the Hurloon mountains are known for their love of battle. They are also celebrated for their hymns to the dead, sung for friend and foe alike. These hymns often last for days as the minotaurs fill the mountain valleys with their low haunting sounds.

Playing Cost: Describes the price of bringing this card into play.

Graphic Design: Great care has been taken in creating the visual effect of the cards. Each of the seven card types has a unique design, though they all share a similar three-dimensional appearance.

Power and Toughness: Only creature cards have these stats. The numbers describe the offensive and defensive strengths of the creatures.

Coming This Summer!

IT'S A FANTASY CARD GAME

IT'S A COLLECTIBLE TRADING CARD SET

It's Magic: The Gathering, the first in the Deckmaster series of collectible trading card games from Wizards of the Coast and Garfield Games. *Magic: The Gathering* is a fantasy game of epic proportions, featuring over 280 different cards. Some are fairly common, some uncommon, and some very rare. Every player has their own unique deck! Challenge your friends, build up a reputation, or participate in tournaments. Whatever you do, though, don't get complacent. There is always more to explore in *Magic: The Gathering*, and your opponent is never defeated until their last life point has been taken.

THE CHOICE IS SIMPLE

WIZARDS
OF THE COAST

Cover

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Challenge

Issue 70

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ABOUT THE COVER

June 22, 1993 marked the 20th anniversary for Game Designers' Workshop. See the Opinion page and A History of GDW on page 5 for the story of what was and what shall be as regards all things GDW.

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"It Was Twenty Years Ago Today..."

Frank Chadwick

President/Co-Founder, Game Designers' Workshop

1993 witnesses two important anniversaries for GDW. This past June 22nd marked the 20th anniversary of the publication of our first game, *Drang Nach Osten*. Autumn marks the 15th anniversary of the publication of the original edition of *Traveller*.

Fifteen years ago, the world was a dramatically different place. Many of the things which were pure science fiction in the first edition have since become reality. Other things which seemed plausible future projections now seem somewhat more remote.

But a vastly more important change has been in our attitude toward science. Fifteen years ago, science offered the last best prospect for adventure, for the drama of exploration and discovery, left to us. Sadly, much of the popular fascination with the hard sciences, and the impact they can potentially have on our lives, has waned.

The best, and most disturbing, measure of this is provided by science education. At the high school and grade school level, hard sciences are taught less often, not more often. Hard science courses are a diminishing part of the typical liberal arts education. Most significantly, while science graduate programs in the United States turn out qualified scientists in undiminished numbers, each year the proportion of those graduates who are foreign nationals increases. The United States is currently training far fewer scientists than it will need in the early decades of the next century, and as we are unable to fill our labs with trained explorers, scientific initiative will shift to other countries, spearheaded by scientists trained in our own schools.

Why? Because American kids just aren't interested. They aren't interested because we, as a nation, have lost at least part of what was, as recently as 15 years ago, the *sine qua non* of the American (and to an extent the Western) worldview—an un-

shakable belief in the future. *Traveller* embodied that belief, and *Traveller: The New Era*, in its own unique way, is an even firmer affirmation of it.

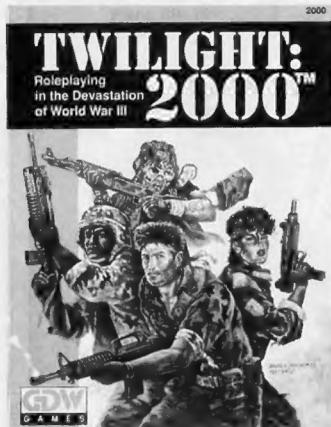
What *Traveller: The New Era*'s philosophy says is that no disaster, no reverse, do downward slide is irremediable. History is not pre-ordained; it is made by people who believe in their ability to change events, and who believe that what they do or refrain from doing is important, and makes a difference. Whether GDW will survive for another 20 years will not depend on market trends, or consumer demographics, or luck; it will depend solely on what we here at GDW do to make it survive. The sort of world you will live in 20 years hence will depend largely on what you do to make it so.

My father, who passed away less than a decade ago, was born before the Wright brothers achieved powered flight. His lifetime spanned humankind's odyssey from Kittyhawk to the Lunar surface. Your lifetime will span an odyssey even more dramatic. As you are reading this, the people who will harness fusion power as a safe and economical energy source are already hard at work. The people who will successfully manipulate a subatomic particle to deliberately move it from point A to B faster than light could cross the intervening distance, have already been born. The people who will crack the riddle of the gravitational spectrum, and open the doorway to direct manipulation of it, have already been born.

Fifteen years ago, the promise of science was a future made qualitatively better, not by providing more material possessions, but by broadening the scope of human endeavor. It is still within our power as a people to realize that promise. It is still within your power to be part of that dream. It is never too late to take counsel in the advice given many years ago by Daniel Burnham, Chicago architect and visionary:

"Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir men's blood and probably will not be realized. Make big plans; aim high in hope and work, remembering that a noble, logical diagram once recorded will never die, but will be a living thing, asserting itself with ever-growing consistency."

A History of GDW



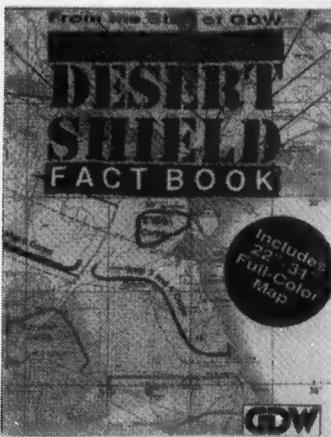
For the hard-core role-playing game simulation fanatic, Game Designers' (that's *s-apostrophe*) Workshop has been synonymous with quality for 20 years. Well-known trademarks such as *Twilight: 2000*, *Traveller*, *Harpoon*, *Command Decision*, and the *First Battle* series are some of the most respected and popular games in their respective fields.

Little did four Illinois State University students know during the early '70s that their passion for simulation wargames would someday translate into an internationally successful company. Their enthusiasm led to a university-funded project that allowed them to create specific games that professors could use in a classroom setting as an alternative education tool. That experience led to the creation of GDW on June 22, 1973.

First headquartered in Marc Miller and Frank Chadwick's apartment, the company had humble beginnings, but by 1975, the company had moved into its present location in downtown Normal, Illinois, and has never looked back.

The original four founders still live in Bloomington/Normal and direct the operations of the company. Paul Banner sits on the board. Loren Wiseman is a game designer on staff. Marc Miller is Director of Licensing and active in computer game design activities. Frank Chadwick is corporate President and still the company's main designer. What began as a longshot dream has published more than 300 titles; produced two acknowledged master game designers from its staff; published the internationally acclaimed *Desert Shield Fact Book*, which climbed to No. 1 on *The New York Times* best-seller list; and currently ships new games to distributors and players all over the nation and the world. GDW publishes 20 or more new titles a year, as well as licensed editions in German, French, Italian, Finnish, Hebrew, Swedish, Spanish, Portuguese, and Japanese to fulfill demands in the international gaming market.

GDW's latest roleplaying venture has been very successful, with *Traveller: The New Era* heading up the "House System" group of roleplaying games. Sharing the same game system are *Twilight: 2000*



(currently in version 2.2), *Dark Conspiracy* (with an improved and updated edition due out this winter), and *Cadillacs and Dinosaurs*, based on the award-winning comic book series by Mark Schultz and published by Kitchen Sink Press. A new edition of *C&D* will also appear this winter, updated to be compatible with the CBS Saturday morning cartoon show that debuts this fall. Each of these genres incorporates a base gaming system, thus each are compatible with each other. All supplemental material for each of the separate genres are compatible as well.

In addition to the House System family of games, GDW was also proud to be selected as the publisher of Gary Gygax's new *Dangerous Journeys* multigenre roleplaying game system, especially as the first game in the series, the *Mythus* fantasy roleplaying game, marked Gary's re-entry to the fantasy game arena.

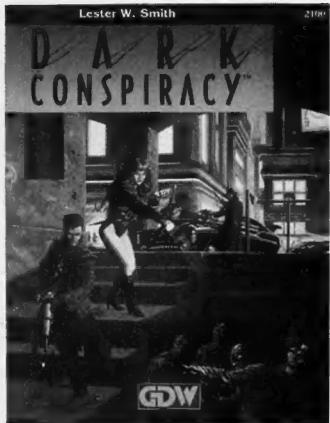
Challenge magazine has become a core magazine in the industry. *Challenge*, which began life as *Journal of the Traveller's Aid Society*, changed its format from a house organ to covering the entire science-fiction gaming industry in November 1988.

GDW also has an unchallenged reputation as a respected wargames and miniatures rules publisher. *Harpoon*, *Command Decision*, and *Johnny Reb* have long dominated their periods in the military miniature rules market.

GDW games are known for their historical accuracy as well as clear, concise, and fun-to-play rules. *Drang Nach Osten* started GDW's long-standing dedication to producing the finest wargames on the market. GDW is the company that brought the industry the original *Europa* series, the *Assault* series, the *Third World War* series, and now the *First Battle* series, for which the hit *Blood and Thunder* is the latest release.

WHAT'S IN GDW'S FUTURE?

Lots of wargame and roleplaying releases through '93 and '94, with the main emphasis being on *Traveller: The New Era* (over half of our output for the next 18 months!), plus some exciting new directions for the other games in the House System, a new genre for *Dangerous Journeys*—the Unhallowed horror roleplaying game, and some book and licensing projects we can't talk about yet, but which you'll really love.







RUNNERS

American executives exploit the bloody conflict between Belize and Guatemala, running explosives to guerrillas in exchange for drugs.

By Roman J. Andron



2027.

An AV-4 crash.

A crushed bio-hazard container.

A deadly accident.

120,000 dead.

20,000...Changed.

Welcome to the Darker Future.

GENERATION

COMING THIS SUMMER. EVOLVE OR DIE

ALTERNATIVES AND VARIANTS

If the PCs persuade Mike to lead the way through the booby traps (an Easy: Persuasion task), Mike gets struck down with a gran mal epileptic seizure half-way up the hill! Asking him to draw a map is fruitless at this point—the seizures leave him weak and confused for several hours.

From his antenna on top of Goodrich Hill, Doc is broadcasting to all listeners within 35 kilometers. The PCs can talk to Doc over his CB, but he is having alternating bouts of unconsciousness and incoherence.

Burning off a clear path (and hoping the grenades cook off in the fire) is a bad move for two reasons. First, the herb crop is worth a fortune, and some species are irreplaceable. Second, the crop is so dry that there is a good chance of setting Doc's house on fire with him still in it.

Running a herd of animals up the hill to detonate the booby traps would be a possibility, if only goats or sheep were available. Pigs or cattle will refuse to make the climb. And farmers will either refuse to volunteer their flocks or ask for compensation in exchange.

To make matters worse, no one thought to mention Doc's dog, a Rottweiler named Boomer. Doc is completely dependent on that old dog and loves him like a child. To Boomer, the PCs look and smell just like somebody who is out to hurt his master.

How about another group of eager adventurers who want to join the player characters in the dangerous journey to the top of Goodrich Hill? These individuals have never been up the hill either, but for dear old Doc's sake, they are willing to give it a try.

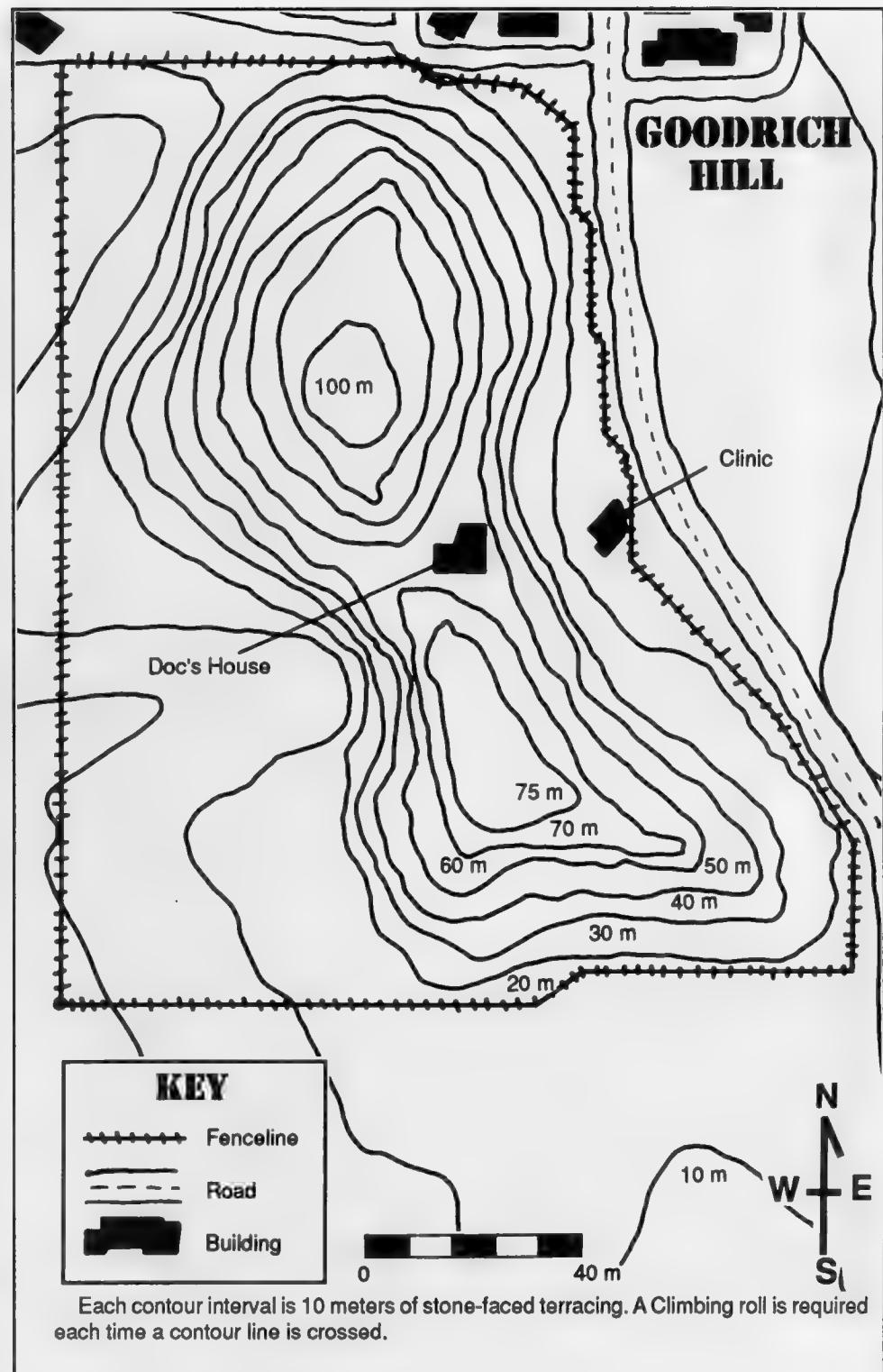
If their help is refused, they will race the player characters to the top of the hill for the opportunity to claim a hefty reward.

Oddly enough, these enthusiastic adventurers are strangers in town, too.

These individuals are actually marauders who just want to get their hands on the fabled cache of drugs Doc is supposed to have secreted on his mountain. Tailor the bad guys to challenge your particular party members according to their specific strengths and weaknesses.

MECHANICAL AMBUSH RULES

Doc's minefield is laid out to a standard pattern with a basic density of four or five booby traps per eight-meter square. The mine locations can be handled randomly by rolling even or odd for four or five per eight-meter grid distribution. Roll dice equal to the number of eight-meter grid squares



the party has crossed, then multiply the even-numbered dice by four and the odd-numbered dice by five. Add the results together and divide by two for the average density and number of D10s to be rolled. The D10s are the chance of accidentally activating a tripwire—any result between 1 and 6 is an activation. Roll the Observation skill of the PC in the lead and subtract that result from half that PC's Observation skill. The result is the number of tripwires that would have been activated by the PCs that were discov-

ered by the pointman. If that number equals or exceeds the number of D10s that came up 6 or less, all the tripwires that would have been set off (but not all the tripwires that are there) were discovered without setting them off. If the number discovered is less than the number there, have the second character roll a Difficult: Observation task and repeat the process. If they are still undiscovered, the tripwires go off. Ω

Playtested by Largo Adventurers' Guild.

Ask Commodore Bwana

Being in the main a continuing column chronicling the state of the art of Traveller: The New Era

and not, sadly,

a rollicking recapitulation of the divers adventures and misadventures of a comradely band of gentlemen adventurers, ruffians, and rogues, and the women they pretend to have known.

Volume I, Number 1

Dear Commodore Bwana,

As a fictitious amalgamation of numerous letters and phone calls, I would like to know what new products will be coming out for Traveller: The New Era. Also, some of my fictitious composite friends would like to know when and where will we see GDW print the starship design sequence for Traveller: The New Era?

Cordially,

Fictitious Amalgamation

Dear Fic,

Pseudo-reality is heck, isn't it? I should know. GDW is planning the following releases for Traveller: The New Era in the coming year and a half.

For the remainder of 1993, we will be putting out *Brilliant Lances: Traveller Starship Combat* in August (which will contain starship design rules), *Fire, Fusion, and Steel: Traveller Technical Architecture* (which will also contain the starship design rules) and *Deluxe Traveller: The New Era* in September. *Deluxe TNE* includes the *TNE* book and *FF&S*, plus some additional goodies which will be available separately for those of you who already have the book. In October we will release the *TNE Referee's Screen* and the *TNE Player's Handbook*. You know what Ref Screens are like, and the *Player's Handbook* will contain more character background plus a lot of ready-to-play character templates.

In November we will release the first *TNE* sourcebook, *Smash 'n' Grab*. *S&G* details the *modus operandi* of the Star Vikings, from the tactics of individual planetary raids, to the Reformation Coalition's methods for interstellar expansion. It will also include several sample scenarios.

In 1994 we plan the following releases for *TNE*, in approximately the following order. Note that some of the titles will be subject to change.

The *Star Viking* sourcebook details the rest of the Reformation Coalition, its organization, and its rebuilding efforts.

Vampire Fleets is a sourcebook that details the psychology of the Virus with many examples of living machinery that can be used in your own campaign. From self-aware starships to living planetary defense networks, to an automated mining station with an inferiority complex, **Vampire Fleets** puts you inside the mind of the vampires—and that's a pretty dangerous place to be.

The TNE Armory is a book of small arms and heavy weapons for *TNE*, manufactured at a wide variety of tech levels, including standard mass-produced weapons and custom-made one-offs.

Free Trader is the sourcebook on the Wilds, from the point of view of the itinerant free traders that make their way through the trackless interstellar wilderness.

Ships of the Coalition is a starship catalog for the Reformation Coalition and neighboring areas. It details new Hiver and Star Viking designs, as well as old relic Imperial vessels.

Striker II is the long-awaited return of **Striker**: miniatures rules for *Traveller*.

Vampire Ship is a boxed game that includes detailed deck plans of a huge vampire ship that will be used with a large number of scenarios. Like *Azhanti High Lighting* many years ago, it will include a combat system optimized for boardgame play.

World Tamer's Guide. So what do you do when you come across a world that has been stripped clean of all life? You start from scratch to build it again, that's what you do, and the **World Tamer's Guide** shows you how.

TNE Vehicles (title subject to change) will be a sourcebook/catalog of a broad assortment of predesigned vehicles for a wide variety of purposes manufactured at all different tech levels.

Crossroads. Sooner or later, the first explorers from the Reformation Coalition will meet the first explorers from another major pocket of post-Imperial society. And when they do, culture shock will be an understatement.

Flight Commander is an expansion for *Brilliant Lances* and adds detailed rules to operate formations of fighters with their particular brand of weapons and operations.

By the way, *Twilight: 2000* is now completely com-



patible with Traveller: The New Era with the publication of Twilight: 2000 Version 2.2.

Last but certainly not least, WE'VE GOT TRAVELLER STARSHIP MINIATURES!!

I'll say it again. WE'VE GOT TRAVELLER STARSHIP MINIATURES!! New from RAFM, the first time ever Traveller starship miniatures of all of the standard designs: Free Trader, Far Trader, Subsidized Merchant, Patrol Cruiser, Lab Ship, Shuttle, Ship's Boat, Modular Cutter, Launch, Scout, *Gazelle*, System Defense Boat, and Type S Scout. All of these will be available in August, with plenty more to follow. Do I have to mention that they're gorgeous?

Time enough for another letter.

Dear Commodore Bwana,

As another fictitious amalgamation of a slightly smaller number of phone calls, I would like to know what is the story with Lucan. Is he still alive or what?

Sincerely,

A. Nother Fictitious Amalgamation, OBE

Dear Obie,

Now that would be telling, wouldn't it?

It looks like we've got room for one more letter this issue.

Dear Commodore Bwana,

Is this column serious or not?

Love,

Suspicious in Seattle

Dear 'Spish,

Of course it's serious. All of the substantive stuff anyway. Any factual stuff in this column is absolutely correct within the limits of my control over life, the universe, and everything, and my mandate from GDW. It's just my tone that I don't take very seriously.

Well, space-jockeys, that's it for this issue. Until next time, this is Commodore Bwana, aboard the Starship *Roxy Music*, signing off.

Science Fiction Roleplaying Game

TRAVELLER

The New Era

STARSHIP COMBAT

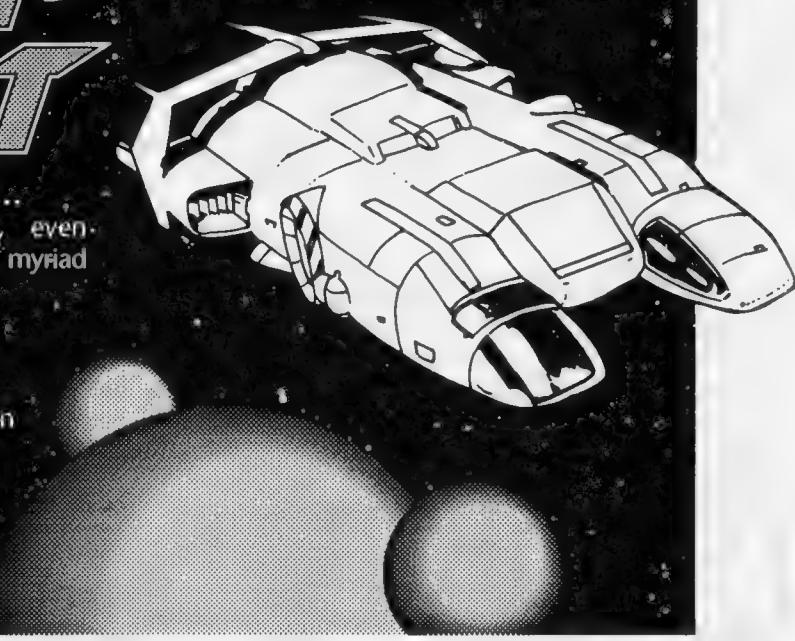
In the cold void of space, death comes easily...

Vampire ships, technologically elevated dictators, even pirates—the ruins of the shattered Third Imperium hold myriad dangers. Starship Combat lets you shoot your way out.

Starship Combat includes:

- Vector-based movement
- Detailed hit location and damage resolution
- Lasers, particle accelerators, meson guns, and detonation laser missiles
- Extensive ship ratings, including pre-Collapse warships
- Complete starship design sequence, usable both with this game and with the roleplaying game

GDW: 0303 \$26.





JP
53

The sea-change spread throughout Imperial Space in Hard Times affects almost everything the PCs do, including the sorts of patrons likely to hire them.

Six Patrons

By James Maliszewski

The collapse of the Third Imperium and the attendant trappings of its interstellar civilization brought about a period of decay and degradation known as the Short Dusk or, more popularly, Hard Times. While this chaotic period may prove ultimately to be but the birth pangs of a new era of interstellar governance, the outlook is very different for the people living during that time. To these individuals, much has changed. The assumptions and truisms of the pre-Rebellion Imperium no longer hold as they once did. New problems and new solutions are the rule of the day.

For interstellar travellers like the player characters in **MegaTraveller** campaigns, this could hardly be more true. Hard Times present a plethora of new problems and possibilities. This sea-change throughout Imperial Space affects almost everything the PCs are likely to do. This change includes the sorts of patrons likely to hire the adventurers.

What follows is a collection of six patron encounters written specifically to reflect the changes in Imperial Space since the onset of the Short Dusk. Like patron encounters of the classic era, these will be generic enough to allow the referee a free hand in adapting them to his campaign, yet specific enough to remove some of the burden from the referee's shoulders. In addition, all of them offer multiple variations which allow these encounters to be used several times in any campaign.

Merchant Captain

Required Skills: Starship skills

Required Equipment: Armed starship (any type)

The PCs are approached by a merchant captain who wishes to hire them and their starship as starmercs. He claims that he has a cargo of medical supplies and spare parts desperately needed on a nearby failing world. He also states that he has had difficulty finding a starmerc group willing to take the job since the failing world is within the sphere of a dangerous viking lager possessing military vessels. The merchant offers to pay handsomely for the PCs' help and even offers to increase the pay if they do run into the vikings. They may not, but it is a possibility which frightens many starmercs.

There are six possible variations to this scenario.

1. All is as stated, but the PCs have no difficulty in escorting the merchant's vessel. The vikings never appear, and they safely arrive at the failing world.

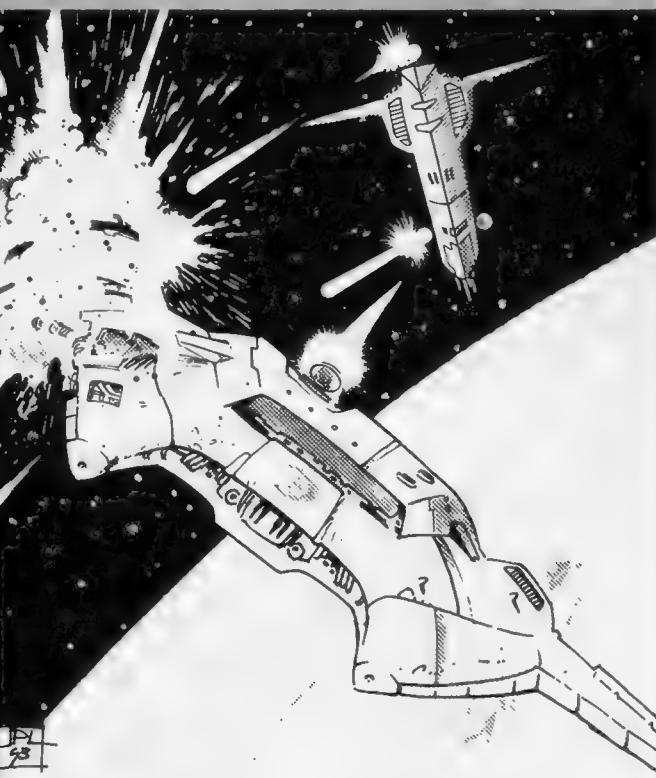
2. All is as stated, but the PCs do encounter the raiders. Luckily, their reputation seems to have been exaggerated. They are mere rippers with a single worn-out vessel and should be easily defeated.

3. As in 2, but the raiders are corsairs with a single vessel which is a match for the PCs' starship.

4. All is as stated. The vikings do exist and they possess several small military vessels. The PCs are no match for them in a straight fight, so they may have to resort to other means to defeat them.

5. As in 4, but the viking lager has actually taken to protecting this failing world and its people. Provided that the PCs make clear their intentions, the vikings will not harm them and may, in fact, become useful allies in the future.

6. The merchant is lying. His cargo is really weaponry for a local rebel group on the world. The so-called vikings are what remains of the system defense force which defends the world against unscrupulous types like the PCs' patron.



Minor Alien Race

Required Skills: Weapons, Stealth, Recon

Required Equipment: Weapons

The PCs encounter a member of a local minor alien race. He explains that he is a leader among his people on this world and that he wishes to hire the PCs for a job. The alien explains further that a planetary corporation has been harassing and threatening members of his community. While the corporation denies this, he does not believe it. He will hire the PCs to investigate into these acts of xenophobia and discover why the corporation is behind them.

There are six possible variations to this scenario.

1. All is as stated. The corporation is taking out its frustrations on the aliens since they are a minority on this world. It has ordered attacks and harassment as ways to provide recreation for disgruntled employees. Proof of this would involve local authorities.

2. As in 1, but the corporation itself does not sanction these attacks. Rather, a small group within the company is responsible.

3. The attacks are not by the corporation, but by a hate group using the corporation as a cover. The corporation is indeed innocent and wants its good name cleared.

4. The corporation is responsible, but for financial reasons. The alien community lives on a rare resource area which the company wants. It wishes to frighten the aliens away so as to gain the resource.

5. As in 4, but the local military is responsible. It is using the corporation as a cover to draw suspicion. The military wishes to gain the resource itself rather than through another source.

6. The alien is lying. He and his community are taking advantage of local xenophobia for their own benefit. They want to force concessions from the company through false accusations.

Corporate Official

Required Skills: Weapons, Intrusion, Stealth, Recon

Required Equipment: None

The PCs meet a general manager for a local corporation. She asks the PCs if they would be interested in a high-paying job. If interested, she states that a megacorporate executive stationed within a nearby factional Safe area is willing to "defect" to her corporation. This "defector" possesses knowledge and skills which the smaller local company could use to good effect. Unfortunately, the megacorp is beginning to suspect the loyalty of its executive and has placed him under heavy guard at all times. Using a corporate vessel and pilot, she wants the PCs to jump into the Safe area, locate the executive and bring him back alive to this world.

There are six possible variations to this scenario.

1. All is as stated. The executive is heavily guarded, but, provided the PCs can defeat the guards, there are no additional complications.

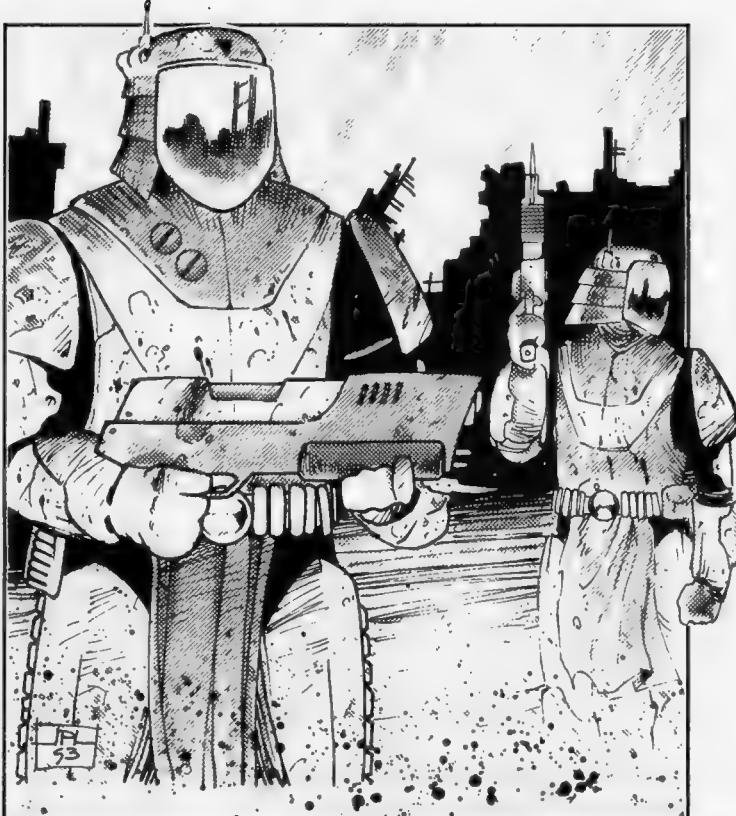
2. All is as stated, but the executive is part of a trap set by megacorporate security. He really does not wish to defect; he only wishes to lure some of the local corporation's operatives to him so that they can be held as hostages and interrogated for information.

3. The patron is lying about parts of the mission. The executive is actually a brilliant inventor who the corporation wishes to seize. He is happy working for the megacorp and does not want to defect.

4. The patron is lying. The executive is actually a defector from the local corporation. She wants him back so as to find out about operations and strategies compromised.

5. As in 4, but the executive is actually a member of local corporate security who decided to defect to a bigger corporation.

6. The patron is telling the truth as she knows it. In actuality, a higher-ranking official is setting her up to sponsor a false mission so as to discredit her and remove her as a potential corporate rival.



Charitable Organization

Required Skills: Weapons, Medical, Liaison

Required Equipment: None

The PCs are approached by a local supervisor for a charitable organization. He explains that a nearby world is reportedly sliding into chaos and is in need of immediate aid. It may be on the brink of becoming a doomed world unless something can be done. A number of vessels will jump into the system to help, but he needs additional back-up personnel to ensure that the mission succeeds. He has no idea how bad things actually are or what will be found there. The supervisor offers pay as well as the gratitude of the organization.

There are six possible variations to this scenario.

1. The PCs jump in-system and discover that the situation is not nearly as bad as was believed. Helping the people and re-establishing some semblance of order proves relatively easy.

2. As in 1, but raider vessels are in-system. They are hostile and will immediately attack the PCs and the charity's vessels. Raider personnel are even located on the world's surface.

3. As in 1, but a wrecked vessel is in orbit around the planet in a dead man's tumble. This vessel still shows signs of life. A rescue attempt may be made to save these people, who are merchants attacked by a raider band.

4. The planetary devastation is very great, and the local military has seized control. Prison camps abound, and brutality is common. The PCs might have to deal with these people if they are to effect any change on this planet.

5. The planetary devastation is very great. Bands of armed men pillage and plunder what is left. These men are perpetrating atrocities against the survivors, and the PCs are asked to deal with them.

6. There is nothing the PCs can do. This world is indeed doomed, and no amount of help will change that. The PCs must face up to one of the innumerable tragedies of the Rebellion.

Businessman

Required Skills: Intrusion, Stealth

Required Equipment: None

The PCs are hired by a local businessman. He complains that since the collapse of the Imperial economy, he has had great difficulty in obtaining higher-tech weapons and equipment for his clients. What little of it this world gets goes to the military. To that end, he wants the PCs to break into an armory and steal enough weapons for him to sell to his clients. He claims that the military has no right whatsoever to monopolize the high-tech trade and that this is detrimental to the health of the local economy.

There are six possible variations to this scenario.

1. All is as stated. The armory is lightly guarded, and the PCs will meet with little resistance.

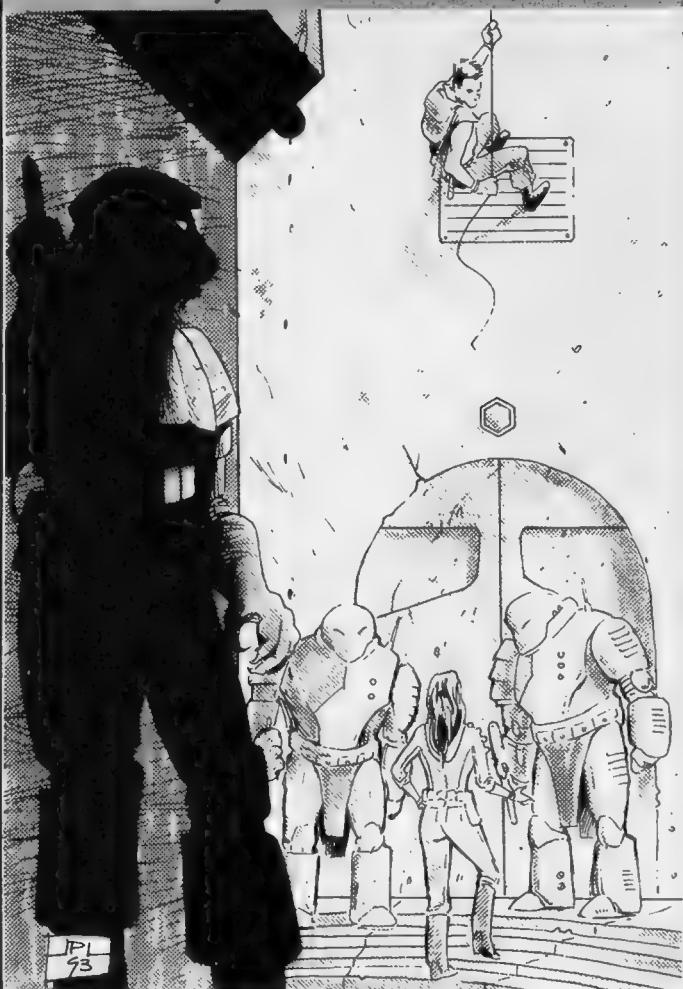
2. As in 1, but the armory is heavily guarded against attack. The PCs will face stiff opposition before they can succeed.

3. As in 2, but the military has been warned of the PCs' efforts on the part of the businessman. They are laying in wait to ambush the PCs and to stop them quickly.

4. As in 1, but the businessman is actually a fence for a criminal syndicate. He wants to sell the weapons to local hoods and thugs.

5. As in 4, but the armory is heavily guarded against attack. Local law enforcement supplements the military guards.

6. The patron is lying. His clients are disgruntled members of the local government who wish to take over by force. They need weapons to arm their supporters for a *coup d'état*. The armory is heavily guarded since the government is wary of just such an eventuality.



Government Official

Required Skills: Starship skills

Required Equipment: Starship (any type), starship weapons

The PCs meet an official of an interstellar polity who wishes to hire them for a mail run. She says that the secret of success for an interstellar government is communications, and she needs the PCs to carry one ton of mail from the capital world to an adjacent one. She will pay highly. She stresses the fact that the mail the PCs are carrying is official and necessary to the success of her interstellar polity.

There are six possible variations to this scenario.

1. All is as stated. The PCs easily carry the mail from the capital world to an adjacent one. There are no complications.

2. As the PCs jump in-system at the adjacent world, they are met by a ripper band which has been raiding the worlds of the polity. They must face the rippers in combat if they are to complete their mission.

3. As in 2, but the PCs face a band of rebel ships instead of rippers. The rebels oppose the current government of the polity and wish to bring it down by any means necessary.

4. The ton of mail is actually filled with weights and nothing more. The PCs have been chosen as decoys for rebels against the polity. They will be followed and attacked at a convenient time. The government official knew this and hoped that the PCs would divert attention from the actual courier.

5. The ton of mail is actually a cache of stolen merchandise. The "government official" is really a member of local criminal syndicate which is fencing valuable and hard-to-obtain items. The PCs are being used as ignorant couriers for this illegal trade.

6. The ton of mail is actually purloined military and economic information about the interstellar polity. The official hopes to sell these to the highest bidder on the adjacent world. She has no agenda other than greed. She would sell the secrets to rebels or vikings without regard for the polity. All that she desires is to make a quick credit by exploiting the precarious situation in the emerging interstellar polity. Ω

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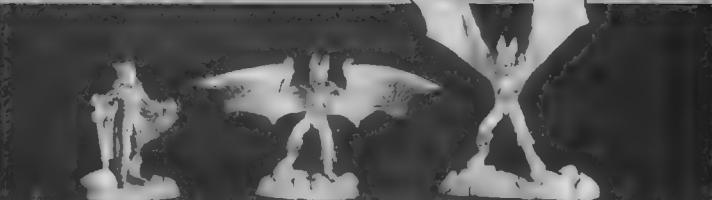
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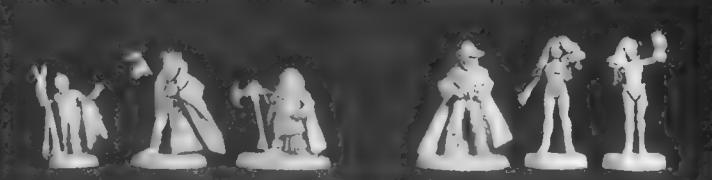
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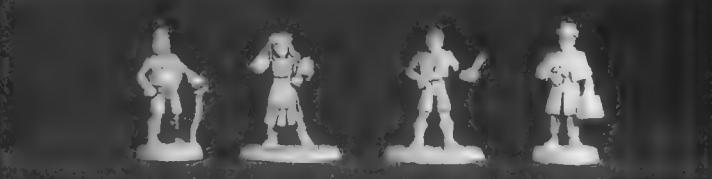
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TORAAGO

The player characters
may find themselves
forced into slavery
when the Darakha jumps
into the wrong system.

By Clayton R. Bush



This adventure takes place on the world Toraago in Gushemege Sector during the Rebellion. The adventure can be set during **Hard Times** and in other locales. As written, the following assumes the characters are cultural Vilani leaving Gushemege Sector for Vland Sector. They have no interest in staying near this world after the adventure is over.

This scenario is written in the adventure nugget format, which means that, depending on choices of individual characters and referees, each gaming group will make its own way through the plot, choosing a unique path through the possible encounter nuggets presented.

ARRIVAL

The adventure begins on 234-1120 when the *Darakha* (a lightly armed merchant with a minuscule arms locker and one 40-ton small craft) exits jumpspace. After being fired at and hit repeatedly in the previous system, the ship jumped hastily. Fears of a misjump followed when one passenger complained of nausea, but subsided as no one else followed suit. The engineering crewmembers were repairing damage to systems until six hours before, when they announced they had done all they could without a shipyard.

Alas, the *Darakha* is not in the intended target system. There is a habitable planet, but no orbital station. The starport does not respond to radio or laser commo, and there is no system traffic. The lack of a gas giant limits refueling options to the habitable world.

Barring damage to the computer and its library data, the party should eventually identify its location as Toraago (1018 C244412-A S Ni 700 Im M0 V M3 D).

Toraago has several seas, with rivers running into them from intervening mountains. Settlement is 90% in one city, with only a handful of very minor abandoned settlements not connected to the city. Manufacturing electronic parts for export to nearby Kamurinmur (1015 A260985-E) was the major industry.

A minor nonhuman race originally seeded the world with alien plant life, adding to the limited local flora. The race's government abandoned the project to settle this world before importing livestock, and left its mixed biology on its own.

Humans eventually settled the world. Efforts to import human livestock failed when the plant life poisoned the livestock. The major food source is fishing in the sea near the city, and the harvest

must be processed to separate local from transplanted varieties of fish.

PLOT LINE

Toraago's economy collapsed after a raid in 1119. The population fell by over 80% due to famine and evacuation. An ex-security officer, now called "Mad Dog," organized remaining workers at the high-tech center and established an enclave. Using the old extrality perimeter, strengthened by the raiders, as a border, he has set up a fief that monopolizes most remaining pieces of the technology.

Robots capture and oversee enslaved human workers. Slaves tend gardens and do some repair work. Any captured PCs will be assigned to unloading the one remaining seafarming ship and helping process the fish products. (Slaves lead dull lives, with life-styles dictated by their workgang assignment.)

Resolving the adventurers' problem involves using the fief's workshops. Stealth is possible. If the players are all captured, assume that a second group from the ship contacts local merchants (outside the fief) who barter for certain parts.

STRANDED

As the ship nears the starport, a missile volley misses it. If the ship persists in trying to land, laser turrets and two bay fusion guns open fire at closer range. At a safe distance, Captain Kadarin will chair a meeting of the ship's company to discuss what to do. An older, experienced ship captain who does his job and leaves trading and landing parties to others, Kadarin will veto any idea to use his crew "as bearers and gofers."

A decision to jump again is almost inevitable, but cultural Vilani always discuss decisions.

1. The ship can refuel away from the starport. There are other seas.

2. It is not a scheduled stop, and they have no one to pick up. A check of the computer's record shows no Vilani megacorporation presence on this world.

The discussion permits some role-playing: Some players will advocate leaving, or staying and investigating. The referee should have NPCs act out the Vilani preference for avoiding risk.

Refueling at a sea distant from the starport goes uneventfully. When the *Darakha* attempts to jump, smoke billows out of the engineering section. Things quickly calm down. After a brief review, the engineers say the ship must land somewhere so they can take the jump drive apart.

If they are running the ship, the players may choose where to land. Otherwise, the ship settles into a wooded valley 30 kilometers due west of the starport. NOE approach and local hills should have concealed its arrival from ground-based sensors. (There are no orbiting satellites, and there has been no sign of any flying vehicles.)

No one approaches or sneaks up on the ship. Its approach did go undetected. (Mad Dog and company do not care about passersby.)

To diagnose problem:

Routine, Engineering, 1 hour (safe).

Referee: They need a new germanium capacitor, or a crystaliron forge to make a new one. On outstanding success, they learn that a crystaliron forge requires weightlessness or antigravity.

Another meeting is needed to discuss the new situation. A "need part" situation can be resolved in one of five ways: make the part, jury-rig around the part, buy (barter for) the part, salvage (or steal) the part from a wreck (or someone else's ship), become a native.

MEDURMA PRINCE

The ship receives a repeating message signal: "This is Captain Bryan Nobbles of the long liner *Medurma Prince* requesting evacuation. Our ship cannot be repaired. Do not approach the starport. It fires at anything that flies. Approach our perimeter in daylight."

The signal comes from the southwest and is probably 20 miles away. Kadarin can provide a cutter for the group's use. The ship's locker can provide autopistols for each person in the landing party; only one or two ACRs, shotguns or hunting rifles are available. They can spare one hand computer; the engineers have already entered the specifications on the needed part.

The forested area has evergreen trees rising 30 to 40 meters above the surface. This permits a concealed approach on foot. The signal comes from a clearing, about a kilometer wide at its widest. A ship sits within a staked perimeter, with one entrance through the stakes. The ship's cargo hatch is open, facing away from the entrance.

When the first PC enters the clearing, dark, squat, cylindrical robots emerge from hiding. One rises out of the ground (antigrav), shedding a covering layer of soil. A second (tracked) rolls out from bushes beside the clearing.

They converge on the lead PC, while calling for him to drop any weapons. They will not look for or react to anyone



MAD DOG

Mad Dog, ruler of the redoubt, is an ex-security officer who organized remaining workers at the high-tech center and established an enclave. He and his wife were security staff at starport. Since his wife's death fighting the raiders, he has stopped caring about others. Now he looks out only for himself.

After the attackers left him behind, he organized some people in the factory. They used parts to develop simple robots and electronic surveillance systems, which gave them the edge in fighting gangs. He is now enslaving people to expand his domain until it is large enough to be self-supporting.

Player characters will meet Mad Dog only if a captive attracts exceptional interest, if someone reconnoitering the building goes into the right one or if a pursuit occurs.

else unless fired upon. The robots do not respond to any questions. Their vocabulary seems limited to direct orders. They will not search the character for anything, including commo gear.

The characters' initial impression is that the robots are heavily armored. The antigrav robot has an ACR built in, and the tracked robot has a laser rifle.

After the lead character surrenders, a third robot drives an air/raft out of the ship's cargo hold and over to the character. After he and the other two robots get in, the air/raft flies off in the direction of the starport city.

Play out the eventual search of the wreck. The lights do not work, and the characters are unfamiliar with the ship's layout. The *Medurma Prince* has been stripped of many useful parts, and no sections of her engineering or controls still function. While there are useful parts here, there are no germanium capacitors or crystaliron forges. The ship's log (along with other recording equipment) is not here.

KLACKEN

Located near the coast in a flat river bottom, the city of Klacken looks ravaged. Several tall buildings are missing

their upper halves, and there are few lights. The outermost areas are residential, with a few small stores. Later there are residential, commercial and industrial sections, as well as parks.

The PCs may think to climb to some height. Entering buildings should pose no problem. Surveyed at night from atop a tall building, the starport has several well-lit areas, with a lighted perimeter around the starport and an adjoining area.

Possible events include meeting animals (wild or abandoned), gangs, vehicles or robots. Contact with local inhabitants can lead to meeting with local merchants, who trade with the redoubt and accept protection. Robot attack is presented after the meeting nugget, but could be an encounter in its own right.

RESCUE

While exploring, the group hears sounds of a power drill. Several men are trying to force their way into a building, apparently a bank. Some wear Starport Authority jumpsuits.

The men are cannibals. (This will not be apparent—it's not stenciled on their foreheads.) Some young orphans and an adult female occupy the bank building. Their protector went out four days ago and did not return.

If any of the attackers are captured, one is Gerry Laskur. He admits being a small-time hood, but, hey, a man's gotta make a living. He's not a mechanic, but his gang collected a lot of stuff, and the characters are welcome to any of it they want.

Laskur and other prisoners (if any) will lead the party to their base. It's in the basement of a ruined church about three kilometers away from the bank building. Most of the stuff there still works, but little is of immediate use. A few cans of food turn up, but so do human bones.

At that moment, the remaining concealed cannibals attack. Their leader signals the attack with a laser. It burns out after one shot, then they all rush with clubs.

MEETING

After contacting a gang or some wandering citizen, the group is brought to meet assembled merchants. All of them look hungry and dirty. They run various trades, supply other survivors with tools and stuff, and trade with the redoubt.

The world was attacked and troops landed. They wrecked much of the seafarming machinery and took many skilled technicians with them. A few merchant ships visited afterward, but did not bring enough parts to repair the

seafarming machinery.

Famine followed, then disease. The population is less than one-tenth what it was. Still, some of those missing could have escaped to other areas, which were almost uninhabited before the Rebellion. Food would be a problem, as the local biochemistry is only partially compatible with humans.

Some group kept the starport secure. Who they were no one now knows. People were busy surviving themselves.

Of late, robots have been scavenging the ruins of the city. People without ID bracelets are picked up and carried back to the redoubt. There they are put into work groups preparing or unloading a working seafarming ship or working on gardens.

ROBOT ATTACK

If the characters radio back to the ship, the redoubt's occupants will triangulate the group's location. Robot patrols may also be encountered even if no radio messages are sent.

When attacking, robots converge and carry some people back to the redoubt. These robots may be tracked, hover or antigrav. All have built-in ACRs, and they fire tranq rounds. Treat any weapon skill as 0.

With their usual level of interest, the robots tend to gang up on one or two characters while the rest escape. (They can't all escape all the time.) If the robots do split up, each will try to take one captive.

The robots have short arms built in; any unconscious captives will be placed on a tarp and dragged back to the redoubt. They will drag a captive even if another robot has a conscious captive who could carry the first. Attempts to help a dragged captive will elicit orders to surrender.

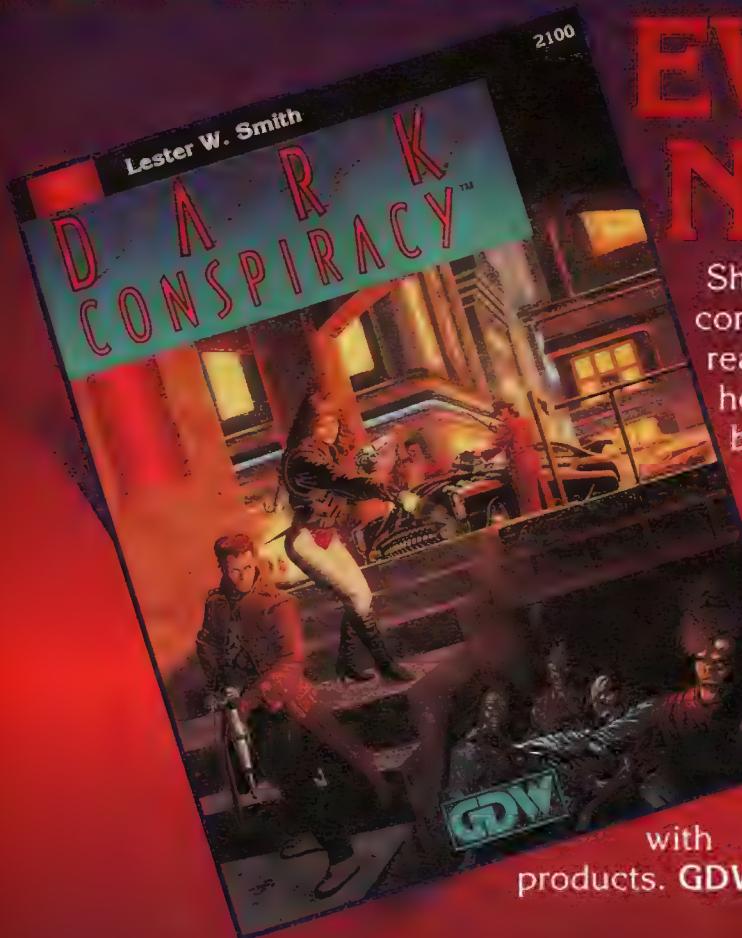
REDOUBT

No one on the outside knows the current layout inside the redoubt. Shoreline and roads have not moved, of course, but which buildings are in use and what for are unknowns.

The perimeter encloses the starport, scout base and an industrial park. A canal with a high fence separates the redoubt from the city, draining marshlands and lake. In a sense, the redoubt forms a peninsula surrounded by the sea, the swampy marshlands and the canal draining the lake.

Immobile robots dot the redoubt. It is impossible to tell if they are watching or if they have powered down. This deployment permits even inactive robots to maintain order.

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The starport and scout base have hangar buildings with closed doors. There is no movement around them. All are empty, except for gutted wrecks. The raiders were very thorough, and the redoubt's occupants found only a few scraps themselves. No amount of searching will find a germanium capacitor in the hangars.

The port section has several piers. The one working seafarming ship ties up at a pier at night. The other three remain at anchor at all times and are not maintained.

The industrial area consists of several prefabricated concrete buildings in assorted grays and light browns. Several have trademarks or names built into the walls, but other exterior signs were deliberately removed.

Players on the outside may approach the perimeter afoot, in a repaired local ground vehicle, or in the cutter, either flying or underwater. Once detected, fire from the starport defenses or from shoulder-mounted antiair missiles becomes possible.

CAPTIVITY

Any captives are dumped in a slave barracks. The floor is dirt over a concrete foundation, the windows are barred, the walls are made of wood, and the door is locked. This building is about 300 meters from the pier (passing other buildings). A 60-meter open area separates the rear of the barracks from the perimeter.

The perimeter here is a 20-foot-tall mesh steel fence topped by barbed wire. There is an ugly looking canal on the other side, and it is about 15 meters across; how deep it is the PCs cannot tell. Two elevated guardhouses can see this stretch of the perimeter from either direction.

The dock-gang holds new captives and those the overseers do not trust, but no one will volunteer that information. No special interest will be shown in captives. They will not be connected with a starship still on this world, because the redoubt's occupants believe that ship left the system.

Any captive is dumped here and left until the dock-gang returns. The dock-gang works in the morning and the afternoon, and is locked in the barracks at night and midday. When they go to work, everybody in the barracks is made to go to work.

The work involves moving raw seafood into containers and trucking it across the pier to a processing plant. There it's treated to remove impurities and packed into food cakes. The ship's

machinery has many sharp parts, including some cutting blades. Characters without gloves may stick their hands on sharp fish bones. Other variety includes hosing out the containers when done moving fish parts.

About 20 individuals will be locked in the barracks for the night. The building and doors are stout enough to withstand any one individual's attempts at forcing them. The lock is not especially hard to pick, if the characters have any relevant skills or equipment.

The other slaves think the characters are spies. They will not admit this, but it will hamper getting cooperation. None will initiate any conversation with PCs.

If a PC discusses escape, the other slaves will ask what the character's plan is. How does he plan to get out of the redoubt, and where would he go afterward? If he does not have a good answer about where to go, no one will assist him. (They are curious about his ideas, mainly.) None will report or restrain him, either.

EXPLORING

Visibility is limited. With no moon, night is very dark. Raised lights illuminate the perimeter, and most of the light available comes from this source.

From the front of the barracks, any character can see a three-story building to the east and a row of one-story buildings to the west. The tall building is windowless, and the character should recognize it as the seafood-processing plant. The other buildings have windows, but no lights are on.

The other buildings are shops. This is apparent when looking in through the windows. The doors can be forced or the locks picked. Forcing a door will automatically sound a silent alarm.

To not set off silent alarm when picking the lock:

Routine, Dexterity.

Referee: Increase difficulty to Difficult if the characters do not have applicable skills. Three robots will appear 10 minutes after the alarm is sounded, but will take only one prisoner (unless the second person is rather incautious). They will relock the door behind them.

Rows of machines line the work area, with work tables mixed in. Investigation shows that most of the machines present work on wood, aluminum, etc. Further search leads to back rooms (an office, lockers with clothing and perhaps some food) and connections to other buildings. Determined search will

eventually find, in a separate room, a crystaliron forge.

To make the needed part:

Routine, Engineering, 10 minutes.

Referee: Increase difficulty if the character is unskilled. An experienced engineer (level 2 or better) could guess at the specifications or make several parts (hoping one is close enough). Anyone without engineering experience or the hand computer (with the specifications) will have to come back.

If the merchants were contacted 24 hours earlier (by someone with the specifications), the characters find a set of 12 recently made parts. They will need experience or specifications to recognize them as possible germanium capacitors; naturally, they can take them.

ESCAPE

The other slaves in the dock-gang have an escape plan. What they need is somewhere to escape to—someplace with edible food. They can pick the lock, know where the redoubt's two air/rafts are, and could pilot them. They do not know anything about a crystaliron forge or have any engineering skills.

The dock-gang will not reveal the escape plan to a possible spy.

The route to the air/rafts crosses several areas "watched" by immobile robots; the dock-gang will not risk the route until the night of the escape. The slaves will suspect

ROBOTS

These cylindrical, squat beings resemble the Daleks of the *Dr. Who* show. Apparent parts are (top to bottom): a rotating turret mounting sensors and one weapon, a solid body looking like armor plate bolted to a framework and a covered locomotion section on the underside of the body. The armor is sufficient to render personal projectile weapons useless.

Common weapons mounted are ACRs, laser carbines, gauss pistols and grenade launchers. Locomotion varies; the types in use are wheels (most common), tracked (rare), air cushion (rarest) and antigrav.

If one is opened (most likely by landing the cutter atop it, damaging the cutter), characters will find biological parts mixed in with the mechanical ones. Careful study (only) will show no evidence of brain tissue. Instead, things like eyes and muscles are part of the mechanism.

The reason for the divergence in types is that these robots were assembled from available parts. Various workers were left on the planet, but no engineers. Personnel have assembled parts together and installed rudimentary programming, but that is all they knew how to do.

BIOTECH RESEARCHERS

The researchers cooperate with Mad Dog, as he has superior force. They are working to re-create food crops so that people can survive here, and they do not have time to get involved in ideology. Besides, Mad Dog has weapons.

Player characters will meet the researchers only if they reconnoiter the right building. During any trouble, the researchers will hide.

anyone who suggests trying it earlier or being a provocateur.

The air/rafts are disabled for the night. One can be repaired easily enough if there is time, and the other needs extensive work but could be flown. Conjure up red oil lights, the smell of burning transmission fluid, grinding noises, etc.

It is technically possible to carry the crystaliron forge out in an air/raft, but it weighs two tons. How anyone could manhandle it from being bolted to the floor of a locked room and into a stolen air/raft fast enough to avoid recapture is beyond the dock-gang.

RESOLUTION

The finale depends a great deal on what goes before. The robots will act to divide the group, perhaps into three parts. Getting everyone together again—after acquiring the needed part—can be

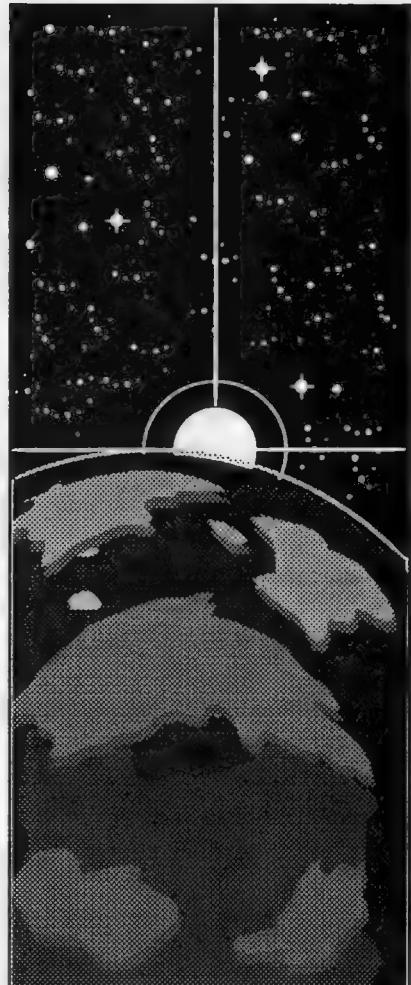
most of the trouble. It helps if captives have and retain communication gear.

(Mis)communication with the slaves can enliven things. For example, they could be coerced to discuss escape, and even agree to doing certain things. Execution depends on what they really believe, which they won't tell to a suspected spy. In playtesting, in the middle of their escape attempt, when the PCs' cutter actually did fly into the compound, they were temporarily confused. They had been sure it did not exist, and they were about to skip out to the air/rafts, leaving the PCs as a diversion.

Contacting the local merchants and having them special-order some parts may be critical. It permits any unskilled characters inside the redoubt to stumble across the parts themselves, and it increases the odds of getting the characters and the part out of the redoubt. If all PCs are captured, determine when a second group would have made these arrangements.

There will be no pursuit if the group leaves by air. An escape by foot will bring some pursuit, as the redoubt has the means to respond in that case.

Complications range from the characters inside not having the specifications, to an antiair missile crashing an escaping air/raft just outside the perimeter (30 kilometers from safety). Ω



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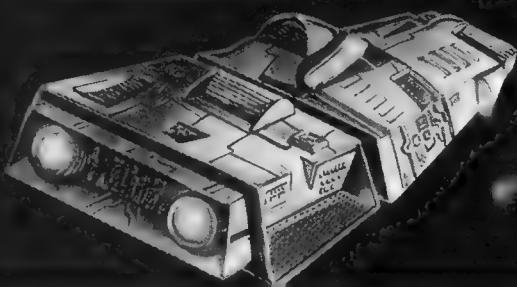
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Fear and Loathing

A fear mechanic rules variant by Craig Sheeley

Morlocks. Vampiric things that make the vampire in Nosferatu look handsome. Horrid flesh-eating slugs and the chitinous monster bugs that they grow into. Ghastly mutants, worm-infested zombies, hideous technohybrids and otherworldly spirits. These are the denizens of Dark Conspiracy, "a roleplaying game of unearthly horror." Yet Dark Conspiracy lacks one key element present in every other horror game on the market--a fear mechanic. True, the monsters and foes in Dark Conspiracy are horrific, but there is no mechanism to translate the horror into game-play.

There are rules for panic (page 77): "This is not blind panic which sends them screaming away, but which rather causes them to freeze momentarily." This panic is caused by wound damage or surprise. Nothing supernatural here; this reaction is instinctive, the "fight or flight" response warring with intellect.

There are also rules for active fear protection; many Dark creatures can project fear or other emotions through Project Emotion. This means that the emotion is imposed from outside. It is an effective weapon, not a response.

But horror means a reaction from within, a situation arising from a person's own fears and phobias. It is not voluntary, or imposed from without, and it runs much deeper than merely being startled. It is the gut-wrenching, brain-paralyzing chill that sticks hearts in the throats, the "blind panic which sends them screaming away." And it's lacking in **Dark Conspiracy**. Certainly, a good referee and good roleplayers can create it, feel the chill and enjoy the suspense—until the Initiative count starts. Once the combat sequence is begun, horror usually goes out the window. Few roleplayers have the dedication to stick to the situation and roleplay panic when a chance comes up for them to strike back.

For example, take the following situation: The characters are out in a deserted town, at night, looking for something that has already killed several people (NPCs, naturally) in a particularly gruesome fashion, but in such a way that the killer's identity remains a mystery. In short, the PCs don't have the foggiest idea what they're looking for.

They skulk onward, ever aware that they're terribly vulnerable to attack, and they don't even know what (or who) might attack them. A sliver of a moon is all that lights the scene, and the PCs' flashlights seem terribly inadequate to illuminate the empty houses around them. They feel more and more uneasy, certain that there are eyes watching them.

The referee, feeling whimsical, has the killer join the procession at the rear, shuffling along behind the rear-guard. Sooner or later, someone looks back and sees it, a creature that is clearly not human, not even terrestrial, an alien thing that would put fear into an alien skull-collector from *Predator*. What happens?

In a real-life situation, plenty of adrenaline would start flowing, and a lot of psychological and instinctive reactions would flood the minds of the people so involved, hampering or overwhelming intelligent thought. In *Call of Cthulhu*, the characters would be making Sanity rolls right and left. In GURPS, it would be time for a Fear Check, at a nasty minus (about -5), with various embarrassing and inconvenient consequences.

In the game of **Dark Conspiracy**, the characters were surprised, so there's a panic check, which the average character (PC or NPC) has a 33% chance of passing without incident. And if the panic check is failed, the only response is that those who failed seek cover. No fear, no horror, no real panic, just a measured military-style response to sudden attack. Which is fine in a military situation such as *Twilight: 2000*, but fails to fit the bill in a "game of future horror."

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These things are scary, but more-or-less identifiable. A close encounter of the worst kind—being gripped by a bloodkin troll, at the mercy of an oni or other daemon, surrounded by hordes of insectoid grubs or even bumping into one of the Dark Masters in person (think of going toe-to-toe with Cthulhu to get an idea of this level of fear)—is a Difficult test. The key is the utter alien reality of the terror faced, the ultimate fear of the unknown. Fear retreats before intelligence, and knowing what you face reduces fear.

CONSEQUENCES

The results of a terror test are interpreted as follows:

Outstanding Success: Such characters immediately get a free action—if they are already in the combat sequence and in a phase where they act, they get another action to specifically respond to the menace, even if they've already acted in that phase. No terror here.

Success: The character may act as normal. There's fear, but the character has controlled it.

Failure: Such characters are terrified. They may not take any offensive actions until they have controlled the fear (see below). They may run away, move to cover or defend themselves in melee combat. No skills (except the appropriate Melee Combat skill used in defense) may be used until such individuals have controlled their own fear.

Catastrophic Failure: Such characters have lost control of their actions. They may run away, faint, huddle into a whimpering ball or even lapse into gibbering insanity (the referee and such player should work together to determine a character's exact reaction). These characters may not do anything effective except, perhaps, run away. No skills may be used, and they may attempt to control their own fear, but it's more difficult (see below).

CONTROLLING FEAR

If a character fails a terror test, he may attempt to deal with the fear and regain control in later phases. When a terrified character gets a chance to act (taking into account actions lost if started by a panic check), the character may test to control the fear. This is done as a regular terror test, but at one level of difficulty easier than the test that caused the fear in the first place—for instance, a Difficult test becomes Average, and an Average test becomes Easy. Easy tests stay Easy. Apply the results of this test as those from a standard terror test (above). So it is possible to snap back to violent action after a brief scare (if an Outstanding Success is rolled), or lose it completely (a Catastrophic Failure).

Characters suffering the effects of a Catastrophic Failure on a previous test attempt to control their fear at the difficulty first encountered (i.e., a Difficult test remains a Difficult test, an Average test remains Average, etc.).

THERE IS HOPE

If this optional rule is used, give a specific experience point toward Willpower advancement to any character who managed an Outstanding Success on a terror test. In addition, give a specific experience point toward Willpower advancement to any character who was subjected to a terror test and subsequently saw the menace defeated ("So, they can die! Next time, I'll know better!"). With this rule, Willpower is even more important in **Dark Conspiracy** than ever. Particularly with the new Initiative Experience Costs introduced in the **Dark Conspiracy PC Booster Kit**. Enact the terror test at your option. I find that it makes for a much more challenging game, since the players can't always count on their characters to act with complete cool and courage any more. And it's amusing to see a high-initiative combat monster go goo-goo while the strong-willed pacifist calmly stands firm. Ω

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DRF-Con '93, Aug. 27-29 at Katrinedalsskolen in Vanlose, Denmark. Contact André Kist Simonsen, Rytterkær 21, Herringlose DK-3670 Vekso Sjælland, Denmark.

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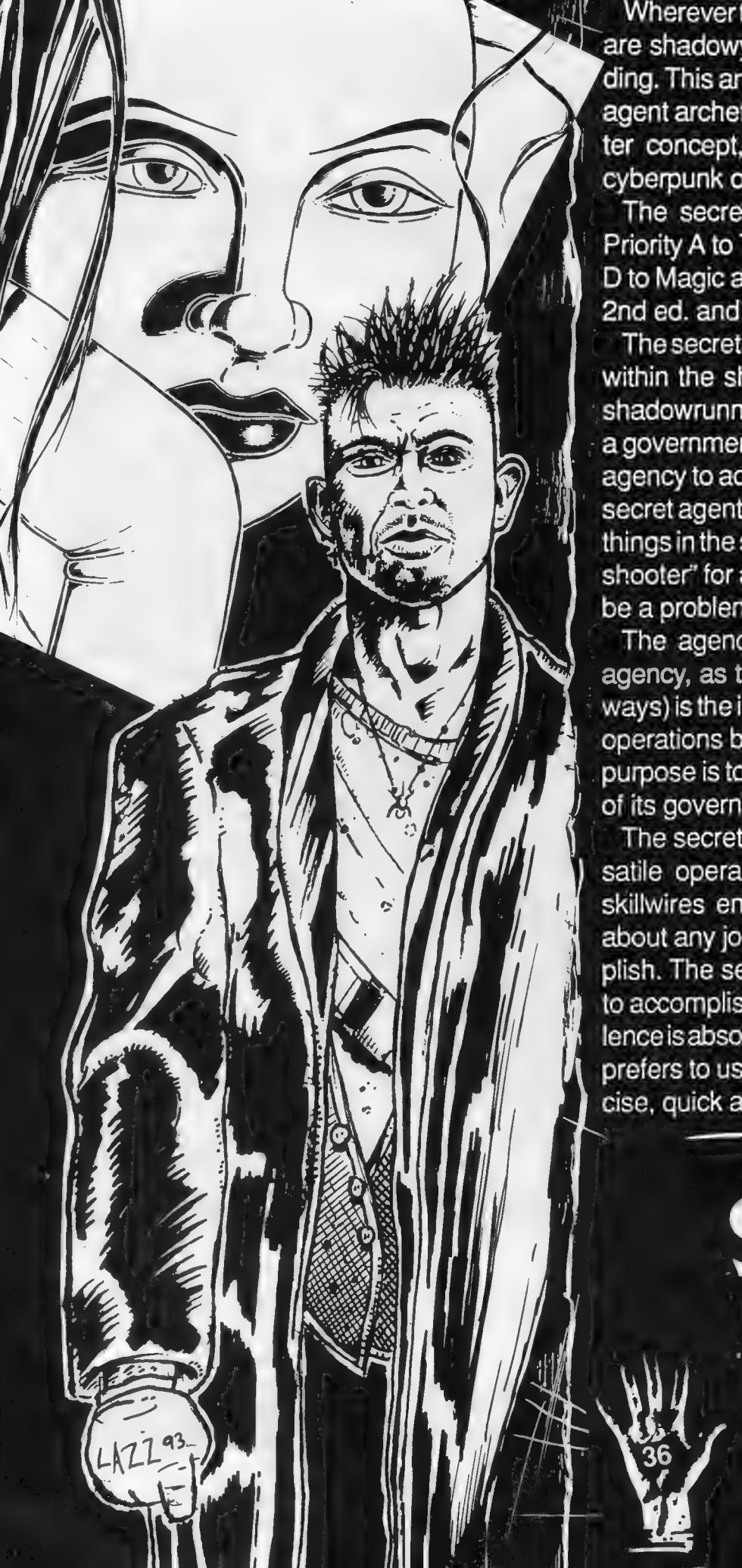
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Wherever there are powerful interests, there are shadowy special agents doing their bidding. This article is a description of the secret agent archetype for *Shadowrun*; the character concept, though, can be used for any cyberpunk or near-future game.

The secret agent was created by giving Priority A to Tech, B to Attributes, C to Skills, D to Magic and E to Race, using *Shadowrun* 2nd ed. and the *Street Samurai Catalog*.

The secret agent in *Shadowrun* is a shadow within the shadows: posing as just another shadowrunner, he is in fact still employed by a government, corporate or tribal intelligence agency to act as a street-level operative. The secret agent is well-placed to keep an eye on things in the shadows and to act as a "trouble-shooter" for any situation the agency sees to be a problem.

The agency (a generic term for any spy agency, as they are all alike in fundamental ways) is the intelligence-gathering and covert operations branch of a host organization. Its purpose is to protect and further the interests of its governing body.

The secret agent is the agency's most versatile operative—the agent's high level of skillwires enable him to be capable of just about any job that a mundane could accomplish. The secret agent prefers using stealth to accomplish the agency's goals. When violence is absolutely necessary, the secret agent prefers to use very "surgical" methods—precise, quick and, if possible, quiet.

Secret Agent

By Dave Panchyk

Shadowrun 2nd ed.

The secret agent has been thrown SINless into the shadows, with a thorough cover story prepared by the agency whenever possible. The agent will often pose as a former company man because the agent's skills and cyberware are much like those of a corporate troubleshooter. The agency will often have a corporate "front" complete with computer records in order to make the agent's background story credible.

The secret agent has two missions: to uncover, assess, report and neutralize any threat to the agency's interests; and to gather information about shadowrunners, corporations, etc., and pass this information on to the agency.

The agency is a 100,000 nuyen contact for character creation purposes. The secret agent character can communicate with the agency via a secured line. With a successful Etiquette (Agency) roll, the character can gain limited access to information (or more rarely, money, equipment or human resources) to help with a shadowrun. The amount of help the agency gives depends on the number of successes the player rolls, and also on how suspicious outside help would look (would it blow the agent's cover?), how the results of the run would benefit the agency and how the character has performed for the agency in the past.

Remember, the secret agent character is still an employee of the agency. He must report at least every 14 days and must act on orders given by the agency, even if they complicate a shadowrun. Any breach of conduct will be secretly investigated by the agency, possibly by an operative the character doesn't know. The agent's income while in the shadows is what he gets from shadowruns, to better fit in with "genuine" shadowrunners.

The secret agent's extensive cyberware modifications mean that the agent has an extremely low Essence. While for many people a low Essence means that they become borderline psychotics or tend toward being moody and depressed, the secret agent is one of those whom a low Essence turns cold and hard. His psyche finishes the job the invasive insertion of cyberware began and turns the agent into an almost totally unfeeling, machine-like person. The "spook" is one of the spookiest people on the street.

PLAYER TIPS

The secret agent is usually a cold-hearted, ruthlessly efficient individual, but doesn't always have to be this way. A tribal council agent, for example, is going to be different from the typical government "man in black." Remember, though, as an agent, that the agency made you, and its goals always come first. You are a well-constructed weapon in its service.

Part of your importance to the agency is your "deniability" as an operative. Don't let anyone, even the other shadowrunners, know that you are a secret agent. Arrange with the GM to refer to the agency as your "government contact" or something else that will not arouse suspicion. Part of your job is to gather information on shadowrunners and give that to the agency; your teammates wouldn't be happy to find this out.

Contact the agency every two weeks. It's assumed you'll tell the agency about everything you've learned and everything that's happened to you, unless you tell the GM you're holding something back. You can call the agency for help or information during a shadowrun, but only as a last resort, and you should never ask for too much.

REFEREE TIPS

Always keep game balance in mind when giving agency help to the secret agent character. Although the agency values its field agents, the character should not expect to be loaned a Banshee LAV, for example. By the same token, the agency will not reject reasonable requests for information or other services, nor will it continuously make demands that interfere with the character's shadowrunning.

When the secret agent character asks for information, help or equipment, decide what that particular agency would have access to. A government agency would have some information on corporate figures (at a +2 target number to Agency Etiquette rolls), but not on go-gangs or many people in the magic world, for instance. (Part of the reason the secret agent is on the street is so the agency can expand its databases.)

And even if a tribal agency were fond enough of the indiscreet agent in the example above, it would be hard-pressed to supply him with a Banshee. The help the agency gives also depends on the number of successes the player makes on an Agency Etiquette roll.

Help keep the character's connection to the agency a secret. The easiest way to do this is give a code name to the character's contact inside the agency, for when the agency needs to contact the character.

This is much better than the old standard of note-passing, which immediately makes the other players suspicious.

The agency can be a little bit of a mystery even to the player character, which allows you to have a little fun. Information can be passed on by agents on the street, such as a bag lady who passes the character a note and disappears.

The character can pick equipment up from a store that is then boarded up and empty the next day. You set the ambience for the agency.

SAMPLE AGENCIES

Each type of agency is obviously going to have different concerns. In general, though, the main concern is sovereignty. The geopolitics of post-Treaty of Denver North America are fairly fragile, and most governing bodies don't want to see any threat to the new status quo.

The following examples serve to show the primary objectives of the various kinds of agencies. The secret agent is expected to follow those objectives and, if possible, deal with any threats with the prior clearance of the agency.

Intelligence agencies try to remain secret, but hardly anything ever is—nonagent characters who make a Street Etiquette (5) test will have heard of one or more of these agencies.

Sallish-Sidhe Tribal Security Council: The main threat to any Native American nation is terrorist Humanis groups; tribal secret agents are expected to keep an eye on any potential trouble from them. The council is also on the lookout against organized poaching and corporate despoiling of the land.

Bureau des Affaires Spéciales (Québec): The Office of Special Affairs monitors any potential threats to the independent state of Québec. Agents have the basic duty of gathering intelligence on organized crime (Montréal has been a Mafia stronghold since the latter part of the 20th century) and on radical or terrorist policlubs such as Der Nachtmachen. Since the Oka confrontation in 1990, the government has also been concerned about land claims from the Mohawk nations.

UCAS Intelligence Service (UCASIS): In addition to the potential trouble from organized crime and radical policlubs, the UCAS government has a great concern with corporations. The government does not like the extra-legal status most megacorps claim for themselves and so watches their activities closely. This is especially important in Seattle—the UCAS does not want anything to jeopardize its control of Seattle as a treaty city.

Special Operations Cadre (Mitsuhama Corporation): The cadre exists to identify and monitor interests hostile to the corporation. Primarily, these are other corporations; the cadre has a special interest in keeping tabs on shadowrunners, as they do the bulk of corporate dirty work. Mitsuhama also likes to know in advance about any tribal or federal attempt to interfere with the running of the corp.

Secret Agent Character Creation

Priorities: Race-E, Magic-D, Skills-C, Attributes-B, Tech-A.

Cyberware	Essence Loss	Nuyen Cost
Skillwire (5)	1.0	500,000
Wired reflexes (2)	3.0	165,000
Smartgun link	0.5	2,500
Fingertip compartment	0.1	3,000
2 chipjacks	0.4	2,000
Datajack	0.2	1,000
50 MP memory	0.5	5,000
Subtotal	5.7	678,500

Equipment	Nuyen Cost
Secure long coat	650
Scorpion machinepistol (smart variant)	1,700
Narcoject pistol	600
Walther WA 2100 sniping rifle	6,500
Monofilament whip (in fingertip compartment)	3,000
Silencer for Scorpion	500
Concealable holster for Scorpion	100
Ford Americar	20,000
Pocket Computer—1000 MP memory	5,000
Dataline Tap (3)	15,000
Data encryption system (6)	6,000
Dataline scanner (6)	600
Wristphone	1,000

Ammunition	Nuyen Cost
100 rounds APDS (Scorpion)	700
40 rounds APDS (sniper rifle)	280
5 Narcoject darts	1,000

Skillsofts	Nuyen Cost
Unarmed Combat: 5	25,000
Etiquette (Street): 5	15,000
Etiquette (Corporate): 5	15,000
Car (Passenger vehicle): 4	12,000
Athletics: 5	25,000
Negotiation: 5	25,000
Interrogation: 5	25,000
Middle Lifestyle (two months prepaid)	10,000

Contacts	Nuyen Cost
Agency	100,000
Fixer	5,000
Street Doc	Free
Armorer	Free
Total	998,130



Secret Agent Archetype

Attributes

Body: 4
Quickness: 5
Strength: 4
Charisma: 2
Intelligence: 5
Willpower: 4
Essence: .3
Reaction: 5 (9)

Initiative

9 + 3D6

Dice Pools

Combat: 7

Skills

Etiquette (Agency): 6
Firearms: 6
Stealth: 6
Armed Combat: 6

Cyberware

Skillwires (5)
Wired reflexes (2)
Smartgun link
Fingertip compartment
2 chipjacks
Datajack
50 MP memory

Equipment

Secure long coat
Scorpion machinepistol (smart variant)
Narcoject pistol
Walther WA 2100 sniping rifle
Monofilament whip (in fingertip compartment)
Silencer and concealable holster for Scorpion
Ford Americar
Pocket computer—1000 MP Memory
Dataline tap (3)
Data encryption system (6)
Dataline scanner (6)
Wristphone

Ammunition

100 rounds APDS (Scorpion)
40 rounds APDS (sniper rifle)
5 Narcoject darts

Skillsofts

Unarmed Combat: 5
Etiquette (Street): 5
Etiquette (Corporate): 5
Car (Passenger Vehicle): 4
Athletics: 5
Negotiation: 5
Interrogation: 5
Middle Lifestyle (two months prepaid)

Contacts

Agency, Fixer, Street Doc, Armorer

IT'LL BLOW YOU AWAY!



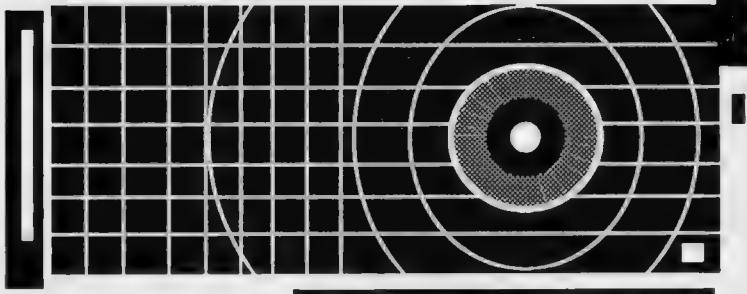
Join the UNE Commandos in a desperate battle to defeat the Machines. Deep within the enemy's underground complex, you must fight your way through winding metallic passages in an attempt to destroy the Overlord Computer. Meanwhile, a soulless, unliving foe stalks you and death lurks around every corner. Even outfitted with the best technology the League of Aliens has to offer it will take more than luck to survive.

Legions of Steel is a futuristic, miniature based, board game. The Basic Set includes nineteen metal miniatures, 48 map templates, foam for miniature storage and much, much more....



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STAND UP AND PLASTIC HEROES ARE NO MATCH FOR THE LEGIONS OF STEEL !!!



Assassin Archetype

"You want somebody what? 'Terminated with extreme prejudice?' Why can't anyone just say 'kill' these days?

"So you want someone dead, and you came to me because I'm the best. But in this world, excellence costs, my friends, and my type of excellence costs a great deal. How much are you willing to pay?

"That is within negotiating range of my price. Sit down, and we'll talk."

Calculating, efficient and totally business-like, the modern assassin will always get his target, no matter who gets in the way.

Attributes

Body: 3
Quickness: 4 (5)
Strength: 3 (4)
Charisma: 2
Intelligence: 4
Willpower: 5
Essence: 0.2
Reaction: 4 (8)

Skills

Firearms: 6
Demolitions: 4
Unarmed Combat: 5
Stealth: 4
Etiquette (Corp): 3
Car: 3
Electronics: 3
Throwing: 3

Cyberware: Wired reflexes (2), retractable hand razors, smartgun link, air filtration, cybereyes with low-light, flare protection and thermographic imaging, skillwire (level 3), muscle replacement (1).

Equipment: Armor jacket, doc wagon contract (Gold), H&K 227 S variant with smartgun link, Ares Predator with silencer, Ranger Arms sniper rifle with smartgun link and silencer, maglock passkey, plastic explosives, compound 12, radio detonator, two neuro-stun grenades, two flash grenades, neuro-poison (ingestible, five doses).

Skillsofts: Korean: 3, Japanese: 3, Projectile Weapons: 3, Sun Tzu's Art of War: 3, Toxicology: 3.

Contacts: Mr. Johnson, Fixer, Yakuza Boss, Decker.

Description: Elegant and cool. Always dressed immaculately. Utterly charming, totally deadly. Ω

By David Perry

Shadowrun

challenge submissions

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Format: All manuscripts must be typed, double-spaced, on standard-sized white or off-white paper. Staple each article separately. The first page must contain the author's name, address and social security number, as well as the title of the article, the game it refers to, the publisher of that game and a word count. Each page must be numbered and contain the author's name.

Articles use three levels of headings (refer to past issues for examples). The first level is the article title. Next, any divisions within the article need section headings, which are all caps on their own line (like Subject Matter, below). Any further divisions within a section need subsection headings, which are upper and lower case, followed by a colon and text (like Format, above).

References: Always include clear, precise sketches of maps, diagrams or pieces of equipment for artist reference. If you send photocopies for artist reference, always indicate the original source or publication. If your article includes tables, send a printout of each table the way it should appear. Always send a copy of your technical design spreadsheets, if applicable (especially for Traveller). Also, please include a bibliography of your sources, especially with historical or geographical submissions. Mark both technical design sheets and bibliographies "for reference only."

Computers: Submissions on disk are encouraged and will expedite the publication process. Send disks in a suitable mailer, along with a printed copy. Disks will not be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped disk mailer. Always keep all printer commands, page numbering and so on out of the text. We are able to take submissions only from Apple Macintosh, IBM PC and compatibles. Apple Macintosh files may be saved only as ASCII text, or as MacWrite or MS Word files. IBM PC and compatible files must be MS-DOS and must be saved as ASCII text.

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FAX: FAX submissions must be sent after 6 p.m. CST. FAX submissions of more than 20 pages must have prior approval. Disk/hardcopy submissions are preferred (see Computers, above).

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We will consider articles on any science-fiction roleplaying game by any publisher, including Twilight: 2000, Merc: 2000, Traveller, Dark Conspiracy, Space: 1889, 2300 AD, Shadowrun, Star Trek, Star Wars, BattleTech, High Colonies, Call of Cthulhu, Paranoia, Cyberpunk 2.0.2.0., Vampire, Werewolf and others. We will not provide coverage for any products produced by or licensed to Palladium Books, at the request of Palladium Books.

Adventure scenarios are preferred. Sourcebook-type articles should be combined with adventure ideas whenever possible. Game variants should be playtested in advance by you and be applicable to a broad range of gaming situations. Referee's notes should give hints to the referee on how to increase interest in the game, make his life easier or spark his imagination. In general, articles should be consistent with previously published information.

Twilight: 2000, Merc: 2000: Articles must be usable with Twilight: 2000 2nd edition or Merc: 2000. Ideas include an adventure situation with a geographical setting, short equipment descriptions, generic personalities or locations for use in a variety of situations, and examinations of modern military life or military equipment.

Traveller: All Traveller articles must be usable in the Traveller: The New Era universe. Include tasks and game statistics where appropriate. Ideas include an adventure with relevant background data, bestiary or short equipment description. Articles may follow either the "adventure nugget" or traditional Challenge format.

Space: 1889, 2300 AD, Others: Short adventures (2000-3000 words), plus a page or so of maps. See Twilight Encounters (a GDW supplement) for samples of the preferred format.

Reviews: Product reviews are not limited to the gaming systems normally covered in Challenge. Evaluations of science-fiction films, novels and other products are also accepted. All reviews must include the approximate date of release, plus the publisher, price, credits and components, if applicable. See previous reviews for format. Reviews should be 500-1000 words in length. Challenge will not publish a review by anyone listed in the credits of the product reviewed.

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Good luck. If you have any questions, send them along with a SASE to:
Michelle Sturgeon, Managing Editor, PO Box 1646, Bloomington, IL 61702-1646 USA





Treasure of Melas

...You may search from the bronze dragon's egg 'till you run out of hope and persistence. Yet all you find is lifeless and cold, fit only for exiles or dead men.

By James L. Cambias

While in Syrtis Major, one of the player characters gets a letter from an old acquaintance named Simon Moon. Moon is a trader and adventurer who has been involved in odd bits of business all over Mars. He has been, at times, an explorer, mercenary, gun-runner, missionary, privateer, bounty hunter and bartender. The letter is brief and cryptic:

*Dear (PC),
Being followed—no time. Keep papers safe until I claim them. Worth a fortune.*

There are two other documents with the letter—a poem, written in some Martian language, and a much-worn commercial map of the city of Melas, in the Belgian Coprates.

Unfortunately, Moon will never reclaim the packet. In the evening edition of the *Martian Gazette* is a short item telling of the unfortunate death of Mr. Simon J. Moon. According to the police, Moon was found dead in an alley near the harbor district of Syrtis Major. He had been stabbed several times with a large knife. As yet, the police have no suspects.

POEM

The poem enclosed with the letter is written in the Memnite dialect (the dominant tongue in the Upper Coprates Valley). Using available resources in Syrtis Major, it is not hard to produce a decent translation:

*Truth lies hidden, and lies hide truth.
You may search far and wide and find nothing.
You may search from the house of Ak-taar-voon's love
to the place where the stars are collected.
Or else you may search from the bronze dragons' egg
'till you run out of hope and persistence.
Yet all you will find is lifeless and cold,
fit only for exiles or dead men.*

Nobody familiar with Martian literature can recognize the poem or shed any light on its meaning.

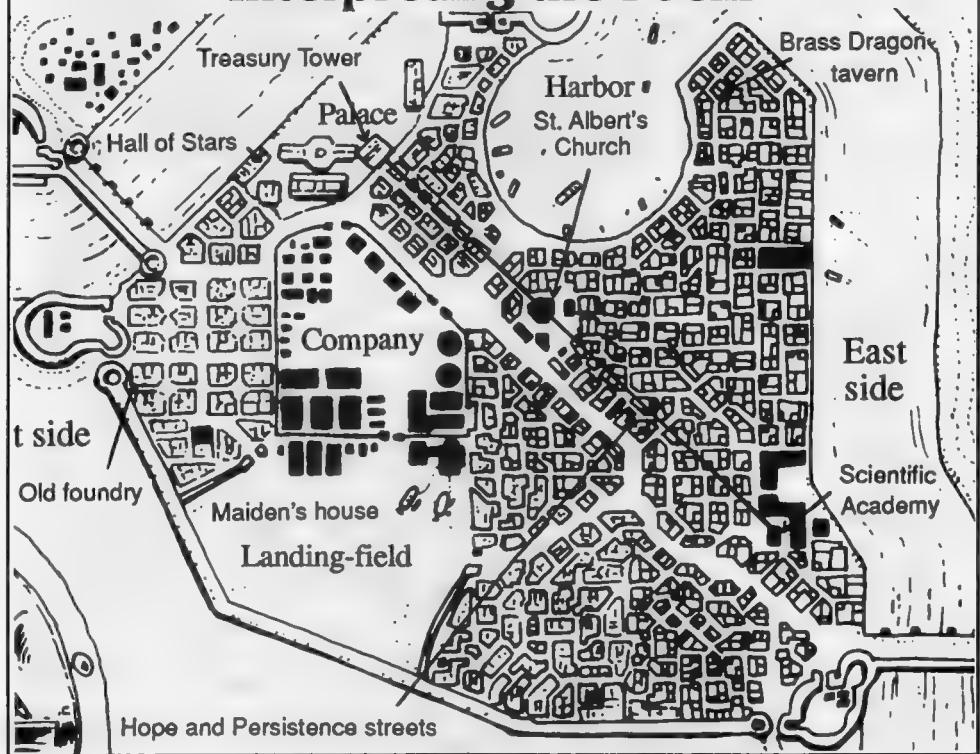
SINISTER VISITORS

If the player characters remain in Syrtis Major, a few nights after Moon's death they will be visited by a man named Gustave Brun. Brun wants to buy the documents which Moon sent to the PCs. He offers £1000 for them.

If the characters want to sell, Brun may be talked into raising his bid to £2000. If that isn't enough, he will sigh and depart. Two nights later, the home of the character to whom Moon sent the letter will be burgled by a pair of hired Martian thugs looking for the documents. If questioned, the robbers will claim they were hired by a short, heavy-set Earthman to find the poem.

Naturally, this sort of strange goings-on should encourage the adventurers to go to Melas

Interpreting the Poem



and get to the bottom of the matter. Otherwise, they will continue to be plagued by robberies and mysterious threats.

MELAS

Undoubtedly, the PCs will have several interesting adventures in the course of travelling to Melas. Once there, they can begin trying to find out why the poem is so important.

Shortly after their arrival, the player characters will get a message inviting them to meet with Captain Jean Tenbroek, head of the Melas Police. If they do not go, Tenbroek will send Sergeant Gustave Brun and some police to bring them by force.

At his office, Tenbroek informs the adventurers that he wants to tell them a little story. *"When the legion began final assault on the city of Melas in 1883, the prince resolved to hold out until the bitter end, though it was obvious that the city had no chance. To keep the crown and other regalia out of Terran hands, he concealed it somewhere in the city and hid clues to the location in a poem. Somehow, your friend Mr. Moon came into possession of that poem, and I believe you now have it. Let me be frank—it is useless to you. Only someone like myself with an intimate knowledge of the city can find the treasure. I offer you £2500 and passage back to Syrits Major in exchange for the poem. If you do not sell it to me, your visit to*

Melas will not be a pleasant one."

If the PCs refuse to sell the poem, Tenbroek will indeed take steps to harass them. A police agent will follow the party members whenever they go out, and the characters' rooms will be searched frequently.

Captain Tenbroek will also have his spy Ta-na-roo attempt to ingratiate himself with the adventurers and report back on their progress. And if the PCs do violate any law while in Melas, they can be sure of spending some time locked up.

DECIPHERING THE POEM

The poem is a coded set of directions to the hidden Melassian regalia. There are four major clues—each refers to a specific location in the city, all noted on the referee's map. Lines drawn connecting the four spots will intersect at the treasure's hiding place. The clues were devised so that only a native Melassian could figure them out, thus protecting the treasure if the poem fell into Belgian hands.

First Clue: The third line of the poem mentions "the house of Ak-taar-voon's love." Most older Martian inhabitants of the city will recognize the name; Ak-taar-voon was the ruling prince from 1805 to 1823. But he never married and kept no harem. Some historical research, possibly at the Melas Academy, will reveal that the prince was an extremely rapacious and miserly ruler, who raised

taxes to the limit and cut spending to the bone. A little logic may lead the players to see that the line refers to the treasury tower on the palace grounds, where all the royal money (the prince's true love) was kept.

The player characters may encounter a red herring in their research: a talkative old Martian in the market square will tell them that the prince once fell in love with a beautiful low-born maiden. His family opposed the match and had her assassinated. In his grief, the prince swore never to love again. Her house was in the center of the district now occupied by the Coprates Company compound. The old Martian is lying—he just likes to tell tall stories to Earthmen.

Second Clue: The fourth line of the poem mentions a place "where the stars are collected." The key word is *stars*. The Melas Scientific Academy has a tall tower built for astrological observations. Anyone at the academy can tell the adventurers about the tower.

A fiendish referee might add the following red herring: one room at the palace is known as the Hall of Stars, and is decorated with hundreds of crystal stars set in the ceiling.

Third Clue: The fifth line of the poem mentions the "bronze dragon's egg." This is a very obscure clue. The "bronze dragons" refers to the old bronze cannons, which are decorated to look like fantastic dragon heads. The "egg" is the old foundry where the guns were cast. If the characters do any historical research about Melas, they may find a written reference to the dragon-shaped cannons. Otherwise, the adventurers might see some of the guns and notice their appearance. Once the "bronze dragons" have been identified, their egg should be deducible.

If it seems that the players are figuring out the clues too easily, the referee can add a diversion in the form of the Brass Dragon tavern, by the harbor mouth. The tavern is a favorite with bargemen, and can be dangerous for Terrans after dark.

Fourth Clue: The sixth line of the poem advises the reader to search "till you run out of hope and persistence." This refers to the intersection of Hope Street and Persistence Street, in the affluent west side of Melas. The players may notice the street names while visiting the British Consul, whose house is on Hope Street. And a good map of the city will have the street names marked.

HIDING PLACE

After the PCs have deciphered the clues in the poem, they must still find the

treasure's hiding place. The two bearings indicated by the four locations intersect at what was once a Martian temple, now used by the Belgians as St. Albert's Church.

Church: The church is a large domed building, built of massive stone blocks. Inside is a huge central chamber and a number of rooms off to the side. The old Martian idol depicting the Harvest Goddess has been removed. Most of the chambers are unused and empty. All of them once had elaborate decorations—mosaics, reliefs and statuary—but the Belgians looted the building thoroughly before turning it over to the church. Father Anton Lascaux lives in one room at the rear of the temple.

Stone: In a small room opening off the main temple chamber, the player characters will find a stone slab set in the floor, carved with the words "*Truth lies hidden, and lies hide truth.*" That is the first line of the poem, and beneath the slab is hidden the regalia.

Treasure: The cache beneath the slab contains a crown, a golden sword and a bejeweled ceremonial robe. The three items are worth £15,000 intact, and the gold and jewels would bring £9000 separately.

Confrontation: Unless the adventurers have been extremely careful, Captain Tenbroek will know when they have found the treasure. He will send Sergeant Brun and a squad of police to confiscate the regalia. The player characters may have to battle the police to keep their treasure. Even if they evade the police, getting the treasure out of Melas could be an adventure in itself.

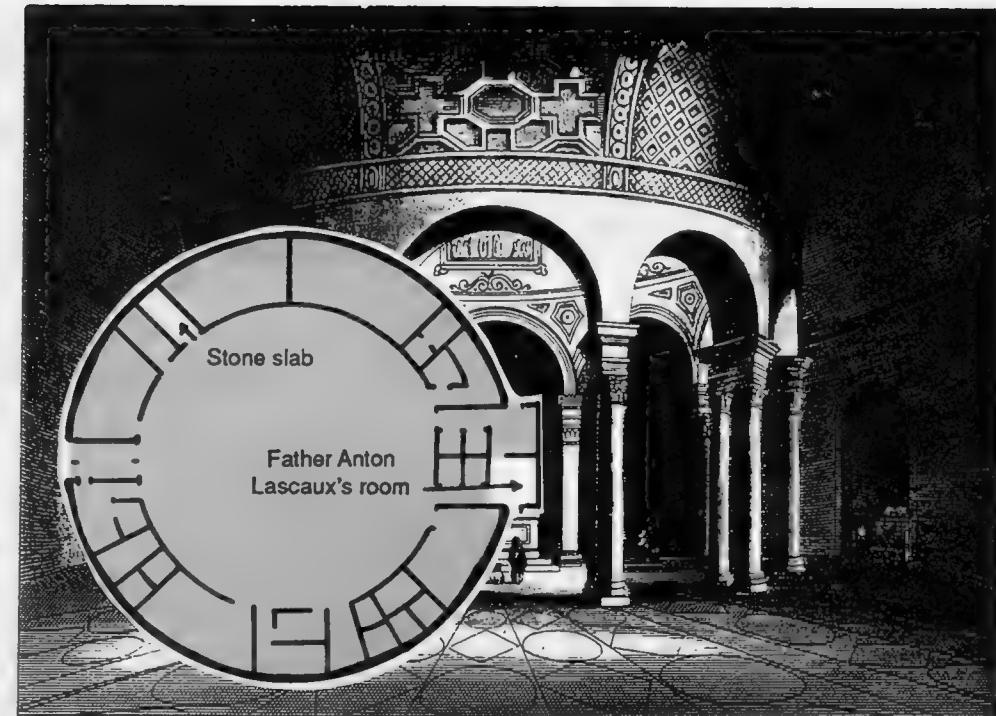
SERGEANT GUSTAVE BRUN

Sergeant Brun is in charge of the "special squad" of the Melas Police. His job is to eliminate rebels and their sympathizers by any means necessary. Sergeant Brun is totally loyal to Captain Tenbroek and will do anything the captain commands.

Motives: Loyal (to Captain Tenbroek), Aggressive.

Appearance: Brun is a short, barrel-shaped man, and is massively strong. His bullet-shaped head seems to rest directly on his wide shoulders. The sergeant wears a Coprates Company uniform and always goes armed. He speaks French with a Flemish accent.

Attribute	Skills
Str: 6	Fisticuffs 5, Throwing 3, Close Combat 3 (edged weapon)
Agl: 5	Stealth 4, Marksmanship 2 (rifle), Crime 2 (pick locks)
End: 3	Wilderness Travel 2
Int: 5	Observation 5
Chr: 4	Eloquence 4, Linguistics 3 (French, Thark, Koline), Theatrics 4, Bargaining 1
Soc: 1	



End: 3	Wilderness Travel 3 (foraging), Fieldcraft 2
Int: 4	Observation 4, Gunnery 1 (machinegun)
Chr: 1	Linguistics 2 (Memnite, Koline), Theatrics 2
Soc: 2	Riding 1 (gashant), Leadership 1

TA-NA-ROO

Ta-na-roo is a young, innocent-looking Martian, who is Captain Tenbroek's most resourceful spy. He is totally amoral and doesn't care who he betrays so long as the price is right. His reports have sent scores of rebels to the gumme plantations. Captain Tenbroek has ordered him to attach himself to the party of PCs, as a servant or guide, and stay with them as they try to locate the treasure.

Motives: Mercantile, Liar.

Appearance: Ta-na-roo is painfully thin, even for a Martian, and his hair is long and unkempt. He wears ragged, cast-off clothes, held together with string. But he can be very charming, and is very useful as a guide to Melas. His native language is Memnite.

Attribute	Skills
Str: 2	Fisticuffs 1, Throwing 1, Close Combat 1 (edged)
Agl: 6	Stealth 6, Crime 4 (pick pockets)
End: 3	Wilderness Travel 2
Int: 5	Observation 5
Chr: 4	Eloquence 4, Linguistics 3 (French, Thark, Koline), Theatrics 4, Bargaining 1
Soc: 1	

FATHER ANTON LASCAUX

Father Lascaux is the vicar of St. Albert's Church and is in charge of all Catholic missionary efforts in Melas. He is a kindly old man, who is terribly distressed by the brutality of the Coprates Company and the Belgian Legion. His missionary work has been very unsuccessful—the Martians consider him to be just another Terran come to enslave them. Father Lascaux has made an extensive study of antiquities in Melas and knows a great deal about the city's past.

Motives: Honest, Friendly.

Appearance: Father Lascaux is a tall and slender old man with snow-white hair and thick spectacles. He has a pleasant expression and speaks softly. He always wears a threadbare black cassock. Lascaux's native language is French.

Attribute	Skills
Str: 1	Fisticuffs 1
Agl: 2	Stealth 1
End: 4	Wilderness Travel 3 (mapping)
Int: 5	Observation 4, Science 4 (archaeology)
Chr: 6	Eloquence 6, Linguistics 4 (English, Memnite, Thark, Koline), Theatrics 1
Soc: 3	Riding 2 (horse), Leadership 2, Medicine 2 Ω

For background information on the Martian city of Melas, refer to "Melas" by James L. Cambias in Challenge 69.

**IF YOU HAVEN'T PLAYED
MILLENNIUM'S END,
YOU HAVEN'T PLAYED**

**Transactions
of the
Royal Martian**

grams (roughly two characters and their gear). The quohr's profile is given above in Entooine, Not Tatooine. Drivers use Beast Riding when controlling the sleds. Each rebel can drive his own sled-team if he wishes, but Krelk suggests that the less mechanically inclined ride in the sled instead.

By the time the rebels head out, the blizzard has ended, but the colored lights which flash across the sky attest to a continuing electromagnetic storm. The sled ride passes uneventfully except for the occasional misbehaving quohr. After about an hour, the group arrives at a tragic scene. Two blue banthas lay on the blood-soaked ice, both missing their horns. A young blue bantha stands nearby, wide-eyed and shivering with fear. Krelk steps off his sled and slowly approaches the young bantha with a strange bone in one hand (this is a brown bantha's cannon-bone—a lower leg bone—which Askhew believes allows communication with the sacred blue banthas). The young bantha whines and makes coughing noises. Characters who make a Very Difficult: Language roll realize that the bantha is speaking! It says, "He is still here."

Young Blue Bantha: DEX 2D, KNO 4D, MEC 0D, PER 2D, STR 6D, TEC 0D, Sense 2D. This young bantha is two meters tall. Adults stand about three meters at the shoulder and have STR 8. Blue banthas actually have white fur, but are named for their beautiful, light-blue horns. They can defend with their horns (7D damage) or trample (8D damage). Physically no different from regular banthas, blue banthas are special in one way—they are sentient creatures with a touch of the Force! They never forget, and they pass down their knowledge through the generations. Askhew shamans often ask for advice and receive simple answers by watching how a bantha stomps its hoof.

This young blue bantha is trying to warn the characters that the hunter who killed his parents is nearby. With a Very

Difficult: Perception roll, the character notices a white-clad figure, Jowart Typok, crouching on a ridge some 150 meters away. Otherwise, a sudden cannonade of blaster fire surprises the group.

Jowart Typok, Hunter: DEX 2D+2, Blaster 5D, Melee 3D+2, Melee Parry 3D, KNO 4D, Planetary Systems 6D, Survival 6D, MEC 3D, Repulsorlift Operation 3D+1, PER 2D, Hide/Sneak 3D+3, Search 5D, STR 5D, Stamina 6D+1, TEC 3D+1. Originally a scout for Interplanetary Charts and Surveys, Typok's livelihood became threatened by Imperial cut-backs on exploration. He now praises the cut-backs for forcing him to discover the lucrative business of professional game hunting. The work is rewarding—he enjoys killing defenseless beasts from afar, and he has become wealthy by selling exotic trophies to collectors and nobles. Credits and strong connections enable him to obtain licenses to carry exotic weapons, hunt endangered species and carry on illegal trade. Cybernetics augment Typok's body—specifically, the Neuro-Saav Corporation's Cardio-Muscular Package (STR) and Hi-Sense Enhanced Eyes (Search). He carries a "bantha cannon," a customized blaster rifle which does 8D damage. During this hunt, he wears a white thermal suit and dark goggles.

Typok snipes at the characters until they are dead, they come toward him or he is wounded. Then he jumps into a vehicle which is parked on the other side of the ridge and heads toward his waiting ship (see Smuggling Ivory).

The rebels may want to give chase. If you own the *Star Wars Rules Companion*, note that the flat ice and snow is Easy Movement, and Typok's vehicle is "out of its element," able to travel only 100 meters per turn. With the basic rules, simply double the speed code of Typok's vehicle.

TYPOK'S "REPTOR"

Craft: TerraTech repulsorlift transport

Scale: Speeder

Crew: 1

Passengers: 8

Cargo Capacity: 100 kg

Speed Code: 1D

Maneuverability: 1D

Body Strength: 2D

Weapons:

Minilaser Fire Control: 1D

Damage: 1D

Flight Ceiling: 3 meters

Typok has converted his vehicle's passenger space into a cargo hold. It now holds dozens of blue bantha horns,

as well as some personal equipment (a single-person survival tent, sleeping bag, glow rod, flares and comlink).

SMUGGLING IVORY

A stock light freighter lies snuggled at the base of a rocky out-cropping. Only by making a Difficult: Hide/Sneak roll are characters able to approach the ship undetected (if they are on foot or quohr sled). If they get close enough, they could use a Moderate: Security roll to sneak on-board and take the captain by surprise.

Jes Fion, Smuggler: DEX 3D+1, Blaster 4D+1, KNO 2D+1, Planetary Systems 4D, MEC 3D+2, Starship Piloting 5D, Starship Gunnery 4D, PER 3D, Bargain 4D, STR 3D, Brawling 4D, TEC 2D+2, Starship Repair 3D+1. Jes Fion is Typok's follower. She wears a blaster pistol in a shoulder holster. Dozens of crates (containing blue bantha horns) fill his ship's hold.

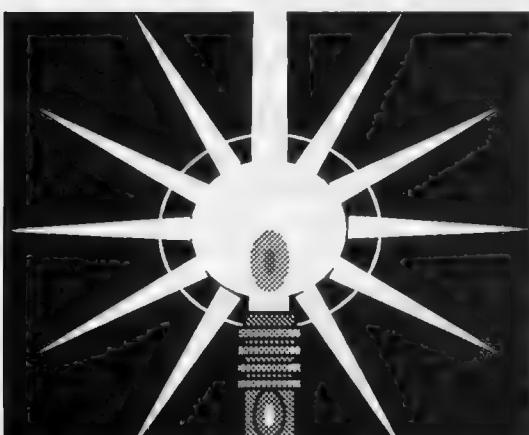
In most situations, the freighter lifts off at the first sign of trouble. If the characters are in their own ship, an exciting chase ensues. Because the electromagnetic storm prevents leaving the outer atmosphere, Fion speeds toward the polar regions, attempting to lose pursuers through clever maneuvers. At one point, she flies though an ice cavern—each captain must make one (or more) Difficult: Starship Piloting roll to avoid hitting the walls and taking 9D damage. The GM can easily improvise other such chase situations.

CONCLUSION

This adventure is worth 3 to 5 skill points, depending on how well the players did. If the rebels try to sell the bantha tusks, they gain no skill points (they're no better than Typok). For Force Point awards, a dramatically appropriate moment begins as soon as the characters meet Jowart Typok and ends when he is defeated.

Adventures on Entooine can continue. With the off-worlder menace eliminated, the rebel outpost is fully prepared in a few weeks, and a squadron of star-fighters arrives. Characters may want to join in on the raids or help with strategy.

Players may wish to investigate the "Bantha question." How did banthas evolve on so many planets across the galaxy, from Tatooine to Entooine? Since the blue banthas are intelligent and "neverforget," they might know the truth. And how did the blue banthas acquire intelligence and limited Force powers? The answers are left to your imagination. ♦



CYBER HERO

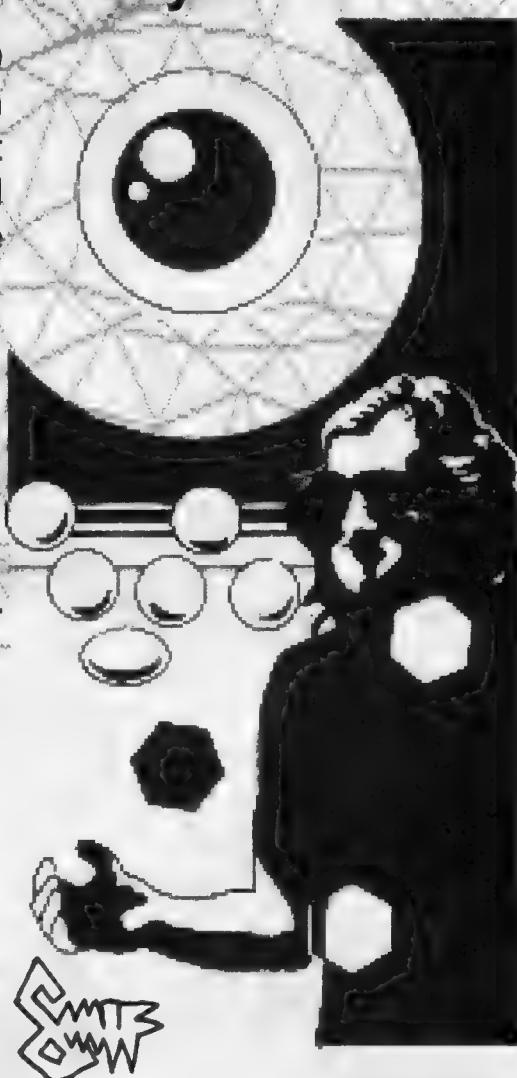
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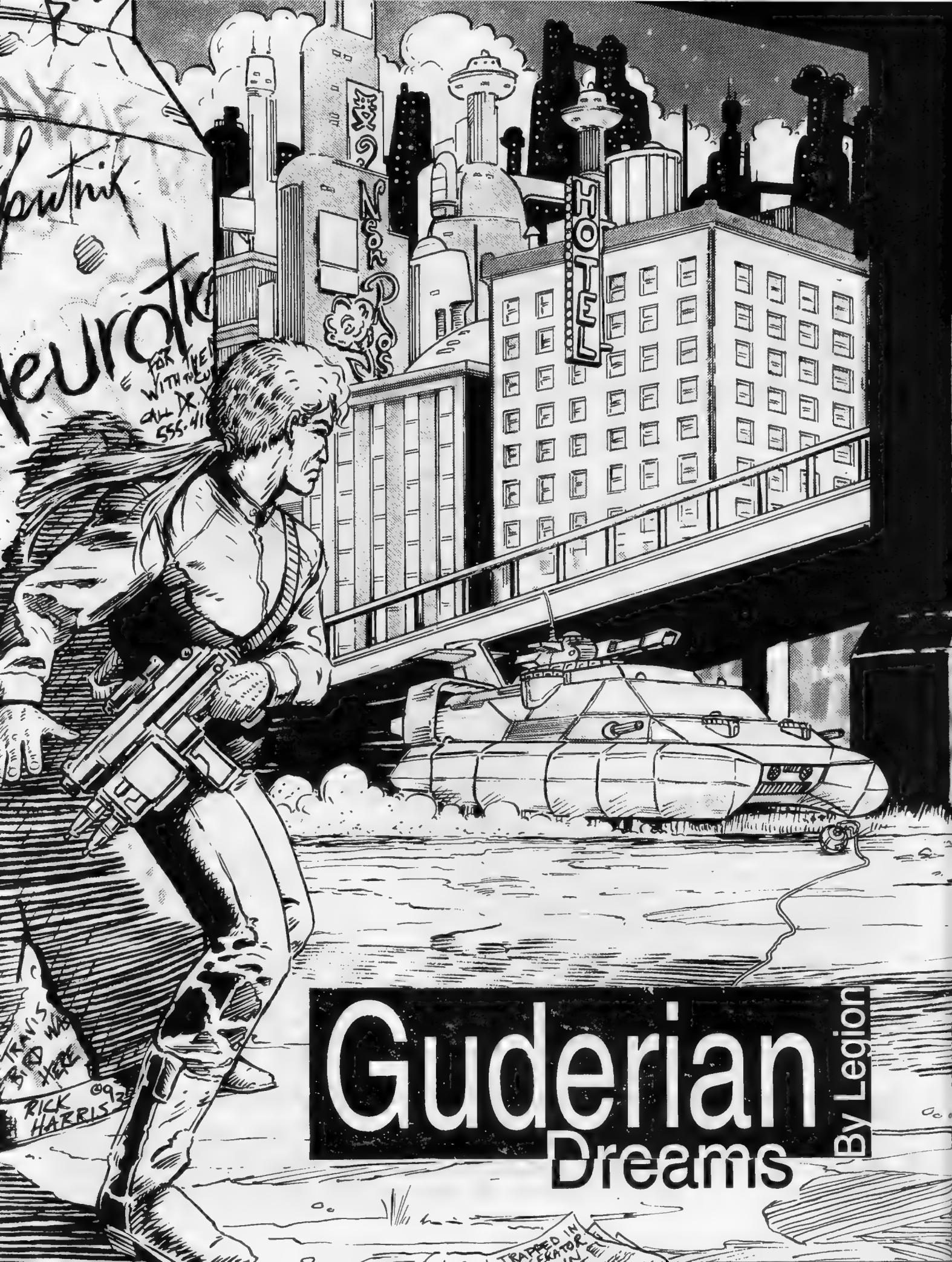
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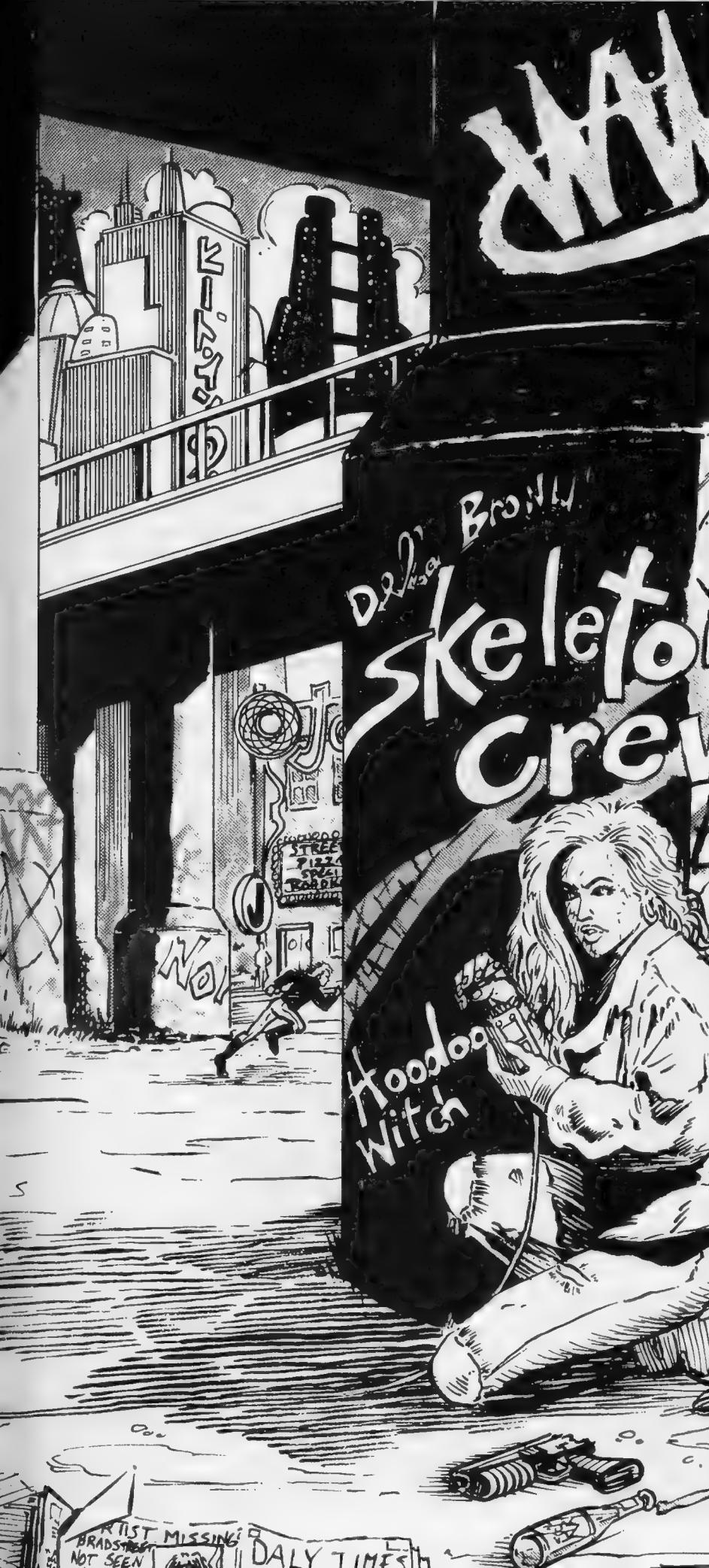
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Guderian Dreams

By Legion



Some nomad packs and families in America have vehicles which are heavily armed and armored—and fast. The police and military call them hover tanks and APCs. People who live and deal with these nomads call them panzers.

In addition to nomads, the rare entrepreneurial solo or fixer has been known to lead the life of a panzerboy. Fixers are usually the people who arrange the jobs for the other panzerboys rather than getting their own hands dirty.

Eventually your players will want to obtain something for their characters that they can't buy in any mallplex. While making connections on the streets

The PCs encounter

and in the bars to find their hearts' desires (an adventure in itself), the PCs will be instructed to proceed to a certain warehouse where they can meet somebody who probably has access to whatever the PCs are after. The PCs will be warned, though, that the people they are going to meet don't do favors—everything has a price.

The meeting is to take place at 7 a.m. Saturday near Night City's waterfront in a vacant warehouse

nomad panzerboys

at 316 Commercial Street.

Just after the appointed time, a heavily armored hovercraft will arrive at the warehouse. One popup turret will emerge on either side of the craft as it whines under the rolling automatic garage door into the half-empty warehouse. "Ne'er-do-wells" is painted on the hovercraft's glacis plate in messy black brush-strokes. "Large Marge" is stenciled in red across its bow skirt. As the machine settles onto

while looking for

its deflating plenum, a hatch opens, and a man steps down from the panzer, introducing himself as Runner, the leader of the Ne'er-do-wells nomad pack. Runner informs the PCs that the Ne'er-do-wells can supply whatever it is that they are after.

While the PCs are discussing availabilities and prices of commodities with Runner, the Night City Police Department will storm the warehouse. Unless Runner or one of the PCs makes a successful

a scarce commodity.

Awareness/Notice (Difficult) skill check, they will be surprised when the police call for them to surrender. If the PCs do not surrender, the police will wait, but if any of them reaches for a weapon or runs for cover or Large Marge, the police will open fire.

Runner will sprint for his panzer's open rear cargo ramp, yelling to the PCs to come along. The PCs will be forced to make a painful (but fairly obvious) decision—hitch a ride out of the area with the Ne'er-do-wells or stick around and get zapped by the cops. After the PCs scramble into Large Marge, Runner suggests that they may as well come along for the ride to Santa Barbara, where, he says, he can get them their gear (especially since he has no intention

of stopping to let them off.)

Parked outside the warehouse are three NCPD squad cars manned by two personnel each. They will pursue the characters until they are outdistanced or destroyed. As Runner and the PCs break out of the warehouse in Night City, the NCPD will transmit the panzers' heading to the NorCal Highway Ranger Compound at Gilroy, who will scramble air units to catch the panzers.

The police are after the Ne'er-do-wells because earlier this morning, one of their squad cars had a run-in with Runner's panzer and lost.

SANTA BARBARA EXPRESS

Runner's planned route runs south-east from Night City for approximately 30 miles to the ghost town of King City, then south along what is left of Highway 101 for nearly 180 miles to Santa Barbara. It's about a two-and-a-half hour trip if there are no stops.

The remainder of the Ne'er-do-wells' panzers are waiting for Runner just north of San Luis Obispo, in the ruins of the town of Paso Robles near the state line.

As Runner glides his panzer into this small ghost town, a couple of NorCal Ranger aircraft will be spotted vectoring in from the south, blocking the route. The Rangers will spot them on their thermal imaging systems and attack.

PASO ROBLES

Hidden in the ruined buildings of this town are the other six panzers belonging to the Ne'er-do-wells. When the group gets past the NorCal resistance, Runner will bring his vehicle to a halt and dismount long enough to meet with his people and give them the lowdown on what happened in Night City before the whole pack gears up for the rest of the drive to Santa Barbara.

The PCs may, if they wish, also get out of Large Marge and meet the other Ne'er-do-wells. Those PCs who exit the panzer will be asked if they have Heavy Weapons skill. Any who do will be invited to ride shotgun on the panzers as gunners.

Once they leave Paso Robles, the Ne'er-do-wells will adhere to strict communications silence since the SoCal is extremely unfriendly to hostile nomad packs. The SoCal Highway Patrol (or SHiPs) are diligent in their efforts to keep Megalopolis Free State's roads clear of "nomad trash." This is reflected in the following encounter table for use on stretches of major highway in SoCal. Roll 2D10 on this table once each hour.

Note that this table doesn't even begin to go into the possibilities presented

by hitch-hikers, breakdowns, abandoned cars, etc.

Information on the weapons and vehicles encountered by the PCs in this adventure can be found in the *Solo of Fortune* and *Chromebook* supplements for *Cyberpunk 2.0.2.0*.

Roll	Result
1-2	SHiPs air patrol
3-5	SHiPs ground patrol
6	Nomad pack
7	Empty highway
8-11	Civilian traffic
12-13	Truck convoy
14	Accident or firefight
15	Free State road block
16-18	SHiPs ground patrol
19-20	SHiPs air patrol

SHiPs Air Patrol: This is a flight of one to three (1D6+2) aircraft, all armed with at least one air-to-ground weapon. The flight leader will take an interest in any passing vehicle on a 2D10 roll of 2 and will hail said vehicle on his radio. If he doesn't like what he hears (or doesn't hear), things could get ugly.

SHiPs Ground Patrol: A patrol of one to three (1D6+2) wheeled cars and/or light armored vehicles with at least two personnel per vehicle. Some of these vehicles mount heavy weapons of various types. Their mission (and reactions) are the same as the air patrol above.

Note that these patrols may call on one another for assistance if needed. There is a 5% chance that another SHiPs patrol is nearby. Roll 1D10. A result of 1-6 indicates an air patrol and 7-10 indicates a ground patrol no more than 15 minutes away, increasing cumulatively by 5% per turn that a firefight or chase continues.

Nomad Pack: This is a ragtag fugitive fleet of 10 to 60 vehicles of assorted types containing three to 300 displaced persons (DPs). They could be doing anything from just driving down the highway with all their stereos blasting, to running some fruit stands, to camping by the road side. These people aren't inherently hostile, but they don't have a whole lot of temper left either.

Civilian Traffic: Car, bus, truck, car, bus....

Truck Convoy: Anywhere from three to 30 tractor-trailer rigs carrying anything from guns to rutabagas, en route from wherever to anywhere. On the open road, these trucks won't stop for anything except the SHiPs, obvious government roadblocks (see below) or breakdowns. When one stops, they all stop. All truckers have a co-driver riding shotgun (literally).

Accident or Firefight: Roll 1D10. A result of 1-6 indicates an accident, and 7-10 is a firefight. Accidents will involve one to six vehicles of various types and sizes. Emergency vehicles will be present (possibly trauma teams). SHiPs units may also be present.

Firefights will be either static or running gun battle. Roll 1D10. A result of 1-5 is static, and 6-10 is running. They usually involve two or three vehicles. SHiPs may be involved.

With accidents and firefights, one often begets the other.

Free State Road Block: This is an impromptu checkpoint set up by one or a combination of the SoCal Departments of Immigration, Customs, Justice, etc. They are questioning passing drivers and doing spot searches of vehicles going in both directions looking for contraband, illegal aliens, etc. The block is set up on a section of the highway that is fairly flat, with restricted access and exit, and will be manned by 10 to 60 armed personnel. A SHiPs air patrol flight will be on the ground close by to support the road block if necessary.

WHAT NOW?

Any PCs who helped out on this run (firing panzer weapons effectively, smooth-talking SoCal Customs officers, etc.) will be rewarded by the Ne'er-do-wells by being granted the equivalent of a Family skill of +2. But they've still got to pay full price for the things they want. Business is business.

Now that they are in Santa Barbara and since the Ne'er-do-wells have no immediate plans to return to Night City, the PCs are on their own. A plane will cost them \$150 each. Or could they rent a car....

Once the PCs do return to Night City why not have the NCPD pay them a visit?

NCPD SWAT TEAM

Members of the five-man emergency response team which storms the vacant warehouse are similar to one another.

INT: 6, REF: 7/10, TECH: 5, COOL: 7, ATTR: 5, LUCK: 6, MA: 8, BODY: 9, EMP: 7/5, Run: 40, Leap: 2, Lift: 90.

Role: Cop.

Skills: Authority+3, Awareness/Notice+4, Handgun+7, Athletics+4, Brawling+4, Melee+3, Rifle+6.

Gear: Militech Arms Avenger with six mags/150 rounds, flak vest and pants, and nylon helmet.

Cyberware: Cyberaudio with digital recording link, Sandevistan Reflex Boost (+3) and Cyberoptic with Antidazzle.

NORCAL RANGERS

The crews of these two craft are equal in ability:

Role: Solo.

REF: 7.

Skills: Combat Sense+4, Pilot (Vectorized Thrust Vehicle)+6, Heavy Weapons+6.

Below are the stats for the two aircraft that make up NorCal Ranger Air Patrol 3-16, call signs Weasel Seeker 1 and 2.

AV-9 Gunship

(Weasel Seeker 1)

Crew: 2 (pilot, gunner/navigator).

Max Speed: 400 mph.

Maneuver Speed: 250 mph.

SDPs: 180.

SPs: 45.

Armament: Two turreted 40mm grenade launchers with 30 rounds each, two pylon-mounted 5.56mm machine-guns with 500 rounds each, and four rocket pods (two wing-mounted with 24 rounds each and two belly-mounted with 72 rounds each).

AV-4 Tactical Recon Aerodyne

(Weasel Seeker 2)

Crew: 3 (pilot, gunner, navigator).

Max Speed: 350 mph.

Maneuver Speed: 150 mph.

SDPs: 100.

SPs: 40.

Armament: One 7.62mm minigun with 2000 rounds and one 20mm autocannon with 1000 rounds.

NE'ER-DO-WELLS

The Ne'er-do-wells are a small pack of panzer-borne nomad mercenary smugglers who operate through SoCal, southern NorCal and Nevada, and western Arizona. The pack is small, only 18 members, with one third of them women. They drive seven panzers and are led by the man named Runner.

The Ne'er-do-wells have two light and two medium air-cushion vehicle (ACV) panzers and two medium and one heavy aerodyne (AV) panzers. They are hoping, over the next couple of years, to convert entirely to AV panzers, selling or trading their ACVs in the process. Runner's panzer is Large Marge. Another of their machines is Ball-Room Blitz. An AV panzer called Road Hog has a hedgehog ram/plow on its bow.

Runner

INT: 8, REF: 8/9, TECH: 7, COOL: 9, ATTR: 5, LUCK: 5, MA: 7, BODY: 8, EMP: 8/6, Run: 35, Leap: 1.75, Lift: 80.

Role: Nomad.

Skills: Family+9, Awareness/Notice+4, Endurance+2, Melee+3, Rifle+4,

Drive+6, Basic Tech+4, Wilderness/Survival+3, Brawling+2, Athletics+3, Heavy Weapons+3, Streetwise+3, First Aid+2, AV Tech+1, Dodge & Escape+3.

Gear: Flak vest and pants, Colt AMT Model 2000 with three mags and 40 rounds, black leather jumpsuit and boots.

Cyberware: Kerenzikov Reflex Boost (+1), cyberoptic with targeting scope and cyberaudio with radio splice.

Runner has been leading the Ne'er-do-wells for the last four years and in that time has given the pack, now radically smaller than when it started from Eastern Kansas in 2015, a new lease on life. The panzers operate individually and in groups, and they are known by many fixers in the region who recommend them as a source of materials, information and, occasionally, firepower.

Standing six feet tall and weighing 175 pounds, Runner is a 27-year-old man of average looks sporting a nose ring and neatly cropped, dirty blond hair.

A shrewd businessman and judge of character, he has extricated his pack from potential trouble on a number of occasions. He says "ya know?" after most of his sentences, which can get tiresome, but other than that, he is a pleasant enough character.

Large Marge

Runner's vehicle is a good example of a medium ACV panzer.

Type: Med ACV
PzKpfw:

Crew: 2 (pilot, observer/gunner).

Passengers: 2.

Cargo: 3000 kilograms (or about six people).

Max Speed: 125 mph.

Maneuver Speed: 100 mph.

Operational Radius: 300 miles.

SDPs: 110.

SPs: 50.

Armament: One right popup turret-mounted medium railgun with 100 rounds, one left popup turret-mounted 7.62mm minigun with 1000 rounds, and one deck turret-mounted rocket pod with 30 rounds.

Equipment: Smoke grenade discharger with 10 rounds, TacComp with IFF program, forward-looking infrared (FLIR), data burst radio, satellite uplink and reactive armor (on front facing only).

Road Hog

A shark-mouth-painted medium AV panzer.

Type: Med AV PzKpfw.

Crew: 1 (pilot).

Passengers: 2.

Cargo: 3500 kilograms (or approximately seven people).

Max Speed: 200 mph.

Maneuver Speed: 125 mph.

Operational Radius: 350 miles.

SDPs: 120.

SPs: 60 (70 on front).

Armament: One deck turret-mounted heavy laser with 20 "rounds" and one coaxial 20mm autocannon with 1500 rounds.

Equipment: Hedgehog ram, smoke grenade discharger with 20 rounds, radar, TacComp with IFF program and databurst radio. Ω

For rules on building and using panzers for your campaign, see page 60.

This article formed independently and was given a heavy dose of inspiration from Walter Jon Williams' novel, Hardwired (Williams, Walter Jon. Hardwired. Tom Doherty Associates, Inc. publishers: New York, 1986).

The title of this article refers to General Heinz Guderian. He was a German tank commander during WWII and wrote a book called Panzer Leader.



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PANZERS

The following rules on building and using panzers in your campaign are provided as a complement to the preceding adventure, "Guderian Dreams."

By Legion

Panzers are a fairly recent development in 2020. Their appearance in America stems from the reaction of various nomad packs to their often brutal treatment by government and corporate security forces. To put themselves on an equal footing with the security forces, these nomads created some of the most potent armored vehicles on the continent.

Panzers are privately manufactured armored hover vehicles of various types. As such, they are not so much highly technical machines as highly innovative.

Panzers average about the size of a moving van. Some versions are smaller, about the size of a delivery truck, and a few are almost the size of a punknaught. Unlike a punknaught, however, a panzer is built to last.

They are either conventional air-cushion vehicles with turbofans and plenums, or they are powered by AV engines stripped from salvaged wrecks or bought from wrecking yards. Even AV panzers, however, are fitted with plenums to assist their engine lift. ACV panzers are the first-generation vehicles of their type, and AV versions are second generation.

Because of all the armor on panzers, their engine lift is limited, making them skimmers. They normally ride between a few centimeters and one meter off the ground, although AV panzers are capable of short (approximately five turns maximum) "lifts" as high as 10 or 15 meters. Lifts are made by vectoring engine thrust down and must be

short because they are hard on the panzers' engines, for which parts are always in short supply.

Armor on panzers is ceramic, plastic, cloth and alloy laminate to keep weight down, although steel may have to do when panzerboys can't get higher-tech materials. Some panzers have reactive armor fitted to them. When pilots can obtain reactive armor, it is usually fitted to panzers' front facings. More armor can be put on AV panzers than on conventional ACV panzers due to the AV machine's superior lift. AV panzers are also faster than ACV panzers, thanks again to their engines.

Panzers are often coated with radar-absorbent paint to assist pilots in hiding when they don't want to blow enemies apart.

Because panzers are rare and unique, almost all are given names by their operators, painted on the vehicle's armor. Kill markers are also popular. They range from rings painted around gun barrels (popular with Pennsylvania Dutch panzerboys) to silhouettes of cats, wheelchairs or stickmen.

USE AND OPERATION

Depending on whether they are AV or ACV, the operation of panzers require either Pilot (Vectored Thrust Vehicle) or Driving skill, respectively.

All panzers can be cyberdriven, and all their weapons can be cyber controlled.

Panzers try to keep opponents at long ranges when in combat and seldom stop to engage in "stand-up" fights. A panzerboy will usually keep

his panzer at speed during a fight, attempting to deke or out-run the opposition.

PANZER CONSTRUCTION

Following are some guidelines to help PCs build a panzer. See the notes on building a punknaught on page 29 of *Chromebook* for more information. The steps below must be followed in numerical order when coming up with a panzer design. Remember that these are only guidelines, and by varying the speed limits on some and the armor limits on others, you will maintain the uniqueness of panzers.

If referees are going to allow their players to build a panzer, the collection and assembly of all the various components may be drawn out over a number of other adventures. If your group is getting together and you don't have a scenario ready, why not have the group's fixer get a hot tip on a reconditioned AV-4 engine?

1. Propulsion: There are two kinds: conventional turbofans (ACV), and vectored thrust engines (AV).

2. Size: All can be classed into three general categories: light (approximately a delivery truck), medium (approximately a moving van), or heavy (approximately a punknaught).

3. Structure: SDPs are determined by size: light (typically 80), medium (110), or heavy (150).

4. Armor: The limit on armor depends on which type of propulsion it has: ACV (minimum of 50, maximum of 60), or AV (minimum of 60, maximum of 70).

5) Weaponry: The number of weapons allowed is determined by its size: light (up to two), medium (up to four), or heavy (up to six).

Weapons can include machine-guns, grenade launchers, rocket launches, autocannon, missiles (both AT and SAM), lasers, rail and coil guns and Gatling guns.

Weapons can be mounted on any of the following: standard turrets, popup concealed turrets, hull sponsons, pods or pintle and ring mounts.

6. Speeds: The maximum and
Continued on page 63.

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WHITE WOLF
GAME STUDIO

Continued from page 60.
maneuver (safe) speeds, in miles per hour, are determined by its propulsion system and its size:

Size	ACV		AV	
	Max	Min	Max	Min
Light	175	125	250	150
Medium	125	100	200	125
Heavy	100	75	150	100

7. Operational Radius: The operational radius, in miles, is determined by its size and propulsion system:

Size	ACV	AV
Light	400	450
Medium	300	350
Heavy	200	250

8. Crew: Any panzer may have a crew of one (pilot/gunner only) or two (pilot and navigator/gunner).

9. Cargo: Panzers like to carry as much as possible. The cargo capacity, in kilograms, depends on its size: light (approximately 2000 kilograms), medium (approximately 5000 kilograms), or heavy (approximately 7000 kilograms).

Passengers can be held in the cargo bay, if necessary. Mesh fold-down seats are built into the bays of some panzers. A good yardstick to use is one passenger for every 500 kilos of cargo capacity.

10. Passengers: A panzer may also be fitted with a limited number of passenger seats in the crew com-

Lasers						
Size	Long Range	Damage	Cost (EB)	ROF	MAG	REL
Light	500m	5D10	9000	1	30	UR
Medium	1000m	7D10	11,000	1	20	UR
Heavy	1500m	10D10	14,000	1	10	UR

Rail and Coil Guns						
Size	Cal (approx)	Long Range	Cost (EB)	ROF	Mag	Rel
Light	10mm	500m	3D10	2000	2	150
Medium	15mm	1000m	5D10	3000	1	100
Heavy	20mm	2000m	8D10	5000	1	50

resent the costs of the items if a person were able to buy them from a store.

Lasers: See the Lasers table for the statistics for vehicular lasers.

Rail and Coil Guns: Rail and coil guns are linear accelerators which use electromagnetic fields to fire ferrous projectiles at high velocity. These weapons require ammunition in the form of metal projectiles. They, and lasers, require electrical power. They normally run off of electricity generated by the vehicle's engine. Storage batteries built into vehicles will hold enough power to fire the weapons' magazine limits, but will then need to be recharged by running the engine for approximately eight hours, depending on the weapons carried. Railgun barrels are typically square or rectangular in cross-section, occasionally triangular. Coil guns have

rately and are also considered to have the same five facings. Each facing is protected by 10 "units" of reactive armor. Whenever a protected facing is hit and detonates, the unit hit is destroyed. Any subsequent hit on that facing has a one in 10 (cumulative per unit destroyed) chance of hitting unprotected portion (e.g., a panzer's front facing has had two of its reactive armor units destroyed); any new attack has a two in 10 chance of hitting its bare hull.

Reactive armor may only be used on ground or hover vehicles which have 40 SPs of armor.

Referees may decide what price to place on reactive armor and how it may be obtained in their campaigns.

Ram Plates: Some panzers mount ram plates, cow catchers or hedge hoes on their bow to reduce

Infantry & Field Weapon Vehicles

By Michael C. LaBossiere

New vehicles designed to carry infantry, vehicles designed to fight infantry, and vehicles designed to support field weapons.

Echidna

Type:	Echidna		Tons
Movement Type:	Tracked		
Tonnage:	30		30
Cruise Speed:	4		
Flank Speed:	6		
Engine:	120GM		6
Type:	Fusion		
Control:	1.5		
Heat Sinks:	10		
Internal Structure:		3	
Turret:	4		
Armor:	80	5	
Location	Points		
Front:	16		
L/R Side:	16		
Back:	16		
Turret:	16		

Weapons and Ammo:

Type	Facing		Tons
MG	Front	.5	
MG	Right	.5	
MG	Left	.5	
MG	Left	.5	
MG	Left	.5	
MG	Back	.5	
MG	Back	.5	
MG	Back	.5	
Medium Laser	Turret	1	
Medium Laser	Turret	1	
Small Laser	Turret	1	
Small Laser	Turret	1	
Small Laser	Turret	1	
Small Laser	Turret	1	
MG Ammo(400)	Body	2	

Overview: During the Star League era, almost no one considered infantry to be of serious military importance. Compared to the 'Mechs and aerospace fighters of the time, a man with a rifle (or 28 men with rifles) was nothing. However, an insightful officer realized that in an urban environment, infantry could be lethal. He proved this

during a wargame in which he and his men as well as some local civilians defeated a 'Mech force using only infantry weapons. The next day, the officer was assigned to a team to prepare a vehicle designed to escort 'Mechs in urban environments in which infantry activity was expected. The result was the Echidna, so named because of its small size and profuse spines.

Capabilities: The Echidna is well equipped to fight infantry with its 16 machineguns and six lasers. A single Echidna can eliminate several platoons of infantry in 30 seconds, making it hated and feared by soldiers. Echidnas are lightly armored, but their primary opponents are lightly armed, so this is not a serious worry. In combat, Echidnas fight in groups and position themselves so their machineguns can support one another (generally, they are one or two hexes apart). Echidnas are often escorted by or escort heavier vehicles or 'Mechs.

Variants: One variant of the Echidna removes one machinegun from each firing arc and adds two tons of armor. Other common variants are Echidnas whose fusion engines have been stripped. Such vehicles no longer carry laser weapons. The missing lasers may be replaced with machineguns, but in some cases the ICE's size precludes the retention of the turret.

Notes: The Echidna was heavily produced near the end of the Star League era as the military was preparing for the possibility of heavy urban combat and civil unrest. As such, the Echidna is a fairly common vehicle.

Porcupine

Type:	Porcupine		Tons
Movement Type:	Tracked		
Tonnage:	50		50
Cruise Speed:	4		
Flank Speed:	6		
Engine:	200		17
Type:	ICE		
Control:	2.5		
Internal Structure:	5		
Turret:	.7		
Armor:	136		8.5
Location	Points		
Front:	30		
R/L Side:	28		
Back:	20		
Turret:	30		

Weapons and Ammo:

Type:	Facing:		
Flamer	Front		.5
Flamer	Back		.5
Flamer Ammo(20)	Body		1
MG	Front		.5
MG	Front		.5
MG	Back		.5
MG	Back		.5

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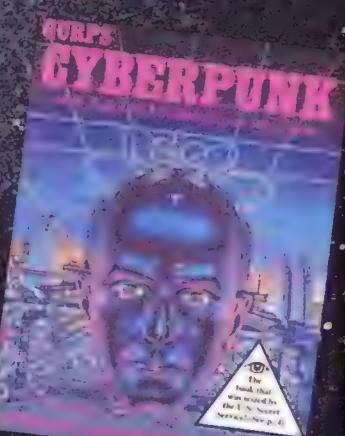
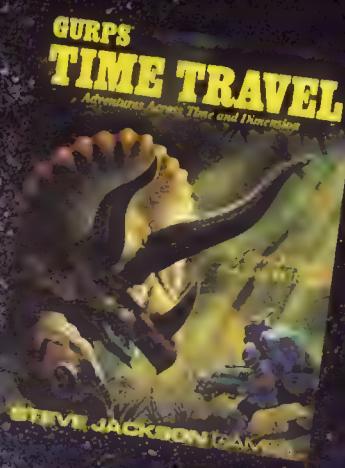
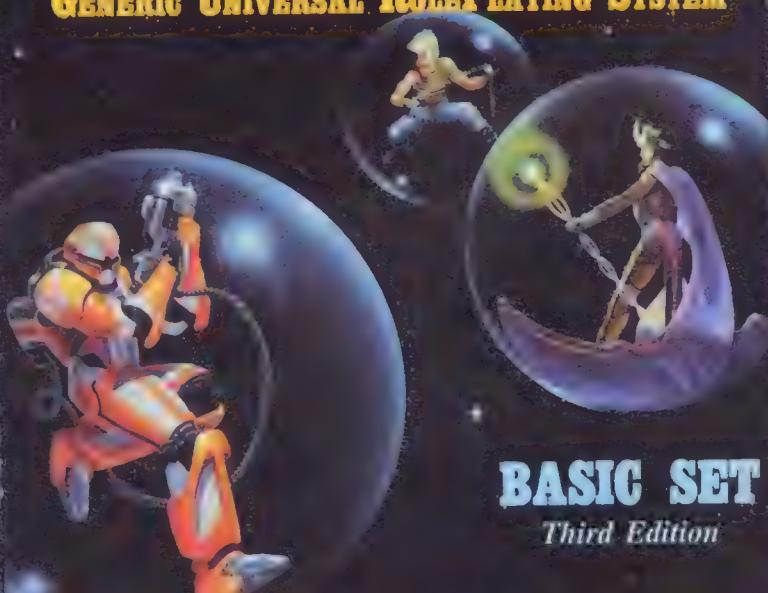
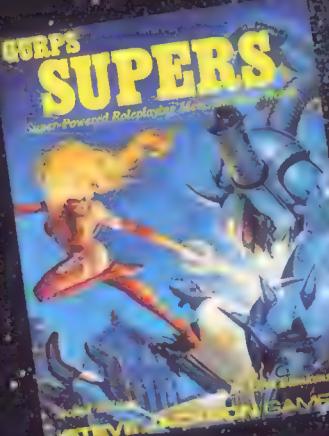
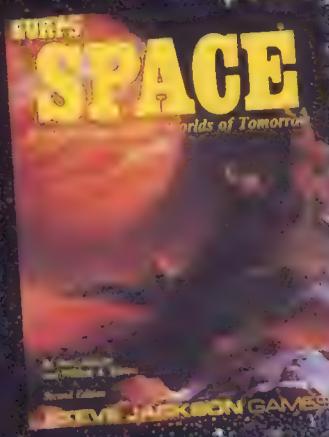
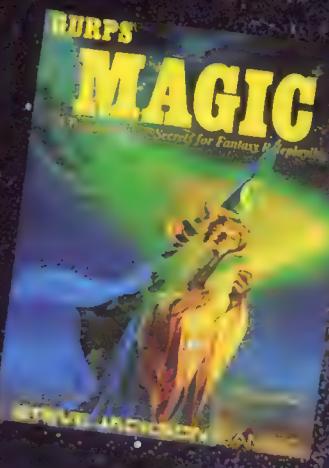
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MG	R. Side	.5
MG	L. Side	.5
MG	L. Side	.5
MG Ammo(200)	Body	1
SRM 6	Turret	3
LRM 5	Turret	2
LRM 5	Turret	2
SRM Ammo(15)	Body	1
LRM Ammo(24)	Body	1

Overview: As the Echidnas began to become less readily available due to losses and cannibalization, the states of the Inner Sphere began to produce ICE infantry fighting vehicles. A common type is the Porcupine. This IFV is produced by all the successor states and is used primarily in urban environments. The Porcupine has also seen action against the Clan BattleArmor forces.

Capabilities: Armed with an array of eight machineguns, two flamers, two LRM 5s and an SRM 6, the Porcupine is well equipped to handle infantry as well as small vehicles. Its 8.5 tons of armor enable it to stay in combat for extended periods of time and make it nearly immune to all but massed infantry attacks. Like their smaller cousin, Porcupines fight in groups with interlocking fields of fire. Against BattleArmor units, Porcupine commanders have found the most effective tactic is to surround the unit with four Porcupines. This generally exposes the unit to eight machineguns and four SRM 6s, which with skillful gunnery and some luck can decimate the unit. Porcupines have a much easier time against conventional infantry.

Variants: Since this is a mass-produced vehicle, variants are common. Most changes involve alterations in the weapon mix. For example, a common variant replaces the LRM 5s with an SRM 6 and two machineguns.

Tapir

Type:	Tapir	
Movement Type:	Tracked	
Tonnage:	30	30
Cruise Speed:	4	
Flank Speed:	6	
Engine:	120GM	6
Type:	Fusion	
Control:	1.5	
Heat Sinks:	10	
Internal Structure:	3	
Turret:	.5	
Armor:	80	5
	Location	Points
Front:	16	
R/L Side:	16	
Back:	16	
Turret:	16	
Weapons and Ammo:		
Type	Facing	
MG	Front	.5
MG	Right Side	.5
MG	Left Side	.5
Medium Laser	Turret	1
Medium Laser	Turret	1
Small Laser	Turret	.5
MG Ammo(100)	Body	.5
Infantry Compartment	Body	8

Overview: The designers of the Echidna were far-sighted enough to realize that infantry was an effective weapon and could be made more effective by making the infantry more mobile. The Tapir was intended to provide that extra mobility. The Tapir is constructed out of a modified Echidna hull, and both vehicles employ the same turret configuration. The vehicles are intended to operate together.

Capabilities: The Tapir is designed to carry two platoons of jump infantry into battle and to support them against other infantry and light vehicles during operations. To this end, the Tapir has eight tons committed to an infantry compartment. The hull machineguns are designed to be removed easily and replaced with additional space for infantry, on the battlefield if necessary (in the Star League era, machines were cheap and people were valuable—not so today).

Variants: The most common variant involves removing two or more machineguns to provide room for additional infantry. Removing two machineguns enables three foot infantry platoons to be carried. Many modern-era Tapirs have been stripped of their fusion engines. Generally, the turret is removed or replaced with lighter weapons to make room for the heavier engine.

Jump Troop Transport/ Infantry Transport

Type: Jump Troop Transport/Infantry Transport

Movement Type: VTOL

Tonnage:	30	Tons
Cruise Speed:	9	
Flank Speed:	14	
Engine:	9	
Type:	ICE	
Control:	1.5	
Internal Structure:	3	
Rotors:	3	
Jump Transport:		
Armor:	24	1.5
Location	Points	
Front:	6	
R/L Side:	6	
Back:	4	
Rotors:	2	

Weapons and Ammo

Type	Facing	
SRM 2	Front	1
SRM Ammo(50)	Body	1
MG	Front	.5
MG	Right	.5
MG	Left	.5
MG Ammo(100)	Body	.5
Infantry	Body	8
Infantry Transport:		
Armor:	40	2.5
Location	Points	
Front:	10	
R/L Side:	10	
Back:	10	
Rotor:	2	

Weapons and Ammo

Type	Facing	
SRM4	Front	2
SRM Ammo(25)	Body	1
MG	Front	.5
MG	Right	.5
MG	Left	.5
MG Ammo(100)	Body	.5

Overview: The need for rapid transport of infantry resulted in the production of VTOLs designed specifically for such work. The two most common types are the jump troop transport and the standard transport. The jump troop transport is less well armored and armed relative to the standard infantry transport. This is due to a variety of factors. First, the bulky equipment of the jump troops requires a larger compartment. Second, the jump troop transport can debark its troops without landing. Not so for the standard transport which must land. As such, the standard transport must have heavier armor.

Capabilities: The VTOL transports are lightly armed and armored and are ill-equipped to engage in anything except their primary task of delivering infantry to the battlefield. They can be used as cargo transports effectively, but are of limited use as combat units.

Variants: Some variants are versions that have been stripped of all weapons in order to carry more troops. Others are gunship conversions which replace the troop compartments with weapons.

Mule

Type: Mule	Tons
Movement Type:	Wheeled
Tonnage:	20
Cruise Speed:	6
Flank Speed:	9
Engine:	6
Type:	ICE
Control:	1
Internal Structure:	2
Armor:	64
Location	Points
Front:	20
R/L Side:	16
Back:	12

Weapons and Ammo:

Type	Facing	Tons
MG	Front	.5
MG	Right	.5
MG	Left	.5
MG Ammo(100)	Body	.5
Cargo	Body	.5

Overview: This vehicle is representative of the generic field weapon towing vehicle. They also serve as light cargo vehicles in dangerous areas.

Capabilities: The main asset of the Mule is its powerful engine. This enables it to haul heavy cargoes at reasonable speeds, as well as enabling it to outrun slower opponents. This is essential for a Mule's survival, since its light armament and armor will not sustain it long on the battlefield.

Variants: Some Mules are subject to battlefield conversions to APCs, and some have weapons installed in the cargo section. There are no actual standard variants of the Mule.

Medusa

Type: Medusa	Tons
Movement Type: Wheeled	
Tonnage:	20
Cruise Speed:	6
Flank Speed:	9
Engine:	6
Type:	ICE
Control:	1
Internal Structure:	2
Armor:	80
Location	Points
Front:	22
R/L Side:	20
Back:	18

Weapons and Ammo:

Type	Facing	Tons
Remote System	Body	1
Remote System	Body	1
MG	Front	.5
MG	Right	.5
MG	Left	.5
MG Ammo(100)	Body	.5
Cargo	Body	2

Overview: The Medusa is a generic remote field weapon control vehicle. It was developed to provide a mobile command center for remote weapon systems.

Capabilities: Though fast and somewhat well armored, the Medusa is not intended to engage other units in combat, at least directly. Its main armament is the eight remote weapon systems that it can control.

Typically, Mules carry remote systems and emplace them on the potential battlefield. The Medusas remain hidden, observing the situation via the remote systems. Medusas generally remain motionless to avoid detection, but can operate their remote systems even at top speed (which is the normal speed for a Medusa that has been spotted). Ω

For three related scenarios depicting attacks by various forces on the city of Walker, see "Ant Hill" by Michael C. LaBossiere in Challenge 71.

For optional field weapons and infantry type additions to FASA's BattleTech Compendium, see "Infantry and Field Weapons" by Michael C. LaBossiere in Challenge 69.

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Signal GK and the Virus

By "Bwana" Dave Nilsen

I t has come to our attention that there is some confusion among **Traveller** players about the relationship between the **Signal GK** adventure and the history of the Virus as presented in recent issues of **Challenge**, **Survival Margin**, and **Traveller: The New Era**. One point of confusion is a misapprehension among long-time players that when they played the **Signal GK** adventure in their campaign they didn't turn any chips over to the Imperial Navy, so the Virus could not have developed in their campaign, because no one ever found out about the chips. The other point is the belief that there is not enough time between the events of **Signal GK** (1110) and the beginning of the Final War (1116) for the chips to be developed into any form of circuit that has been distributed throughout the Imperium. The good news is that neither of these is a problem, and I'm here to tell you why. Frank keeps telling me that I'm too subtle (which is not something that I'm often accused of), so I'll be careful to be clear.

Signal GK was written by Marc Miller and J. Andrew Keith and published in 1985 for the original **Traveller** game. It was set in the first half of 1110, and was the story of the first civilian contact with the intelligent chips of Cymbeline. Briefly, the key points are as follows: Dr. Rushorin, a scientist and citizen of the Solomani Confederation, wishes to defect to the Imperium. The PCs are hired by Imperial Army Intelligence (IAI) to assist Rushorin. After Rushorin's successful defection, IAI allows Rushorin, with the PCs as protection, to go to Cymbeline to test one of his pet theories. Here Rushorin and the PCs discover the intelligent chips of Cymbeline, and make friends with one which they presumably take with them. While this is going on, Rushorin is being pursued by Solomani Security, who seek to capture or kill him, rather than allow him to defect. SolSec agents attack Rushorin and the PC group first on Cymbeline, then again and again as they make their way to Terra with the good doctor. At the end of the adventure, the PCs collect their money and are on their way, presumably retaining Chip 10987 as a companion. But since PCs are a notoriously secretive and paranoid lot, it is a safe bet that they never tell anyone about the chips.

It's a fun adventure, and all of it has nothing to do with the development of the Virus, but it does illustrate a point that has a lot to do with the release of the Virus.

Here's the deal. I will wait while everyone gets out their copies of **Survival Margin** (or **Challenge 64**) and turns to page 69 (page 45 in **Challenge 64**). There you will see that the intelligent chips of Cymbeline were discovered in 1067. Well geez, discovered by who? I mean, they were unknown in **Signal GK** when Rushorin and the PCs went there, weren't they? Yes they were, because the 1067 discovery was made under the aegis of the Imperial Naval Intelligence artificial intelligence project, and was highly classified. Following their discovery in 1067, the chips were studied and bred and tinkered with until scientists achieved the breakthrough that produced the SDG-313F strain in 1086—24 years before **Signal GK**.

With the creation of this new chip strain, the Imperial Navy began lobbying for a new standardized transponder system that would be required aboard all vessels that travelled through Imperial space. The result was the 12th Standard Data Systems Law of 1088, on page 70 of **Survival Margin** (45 in **Challenge 64**), which mandated their use. Although the anti-tamper features incorporated into the transponder boxes themselves were intended to prevent the subversion of the system, it was decided that keeping the nature of the system secret would further prevent any successful tampering. So the Deyo circuit transponders entered service as simple black boxes, whose function did not need to be understood in order for them to work.

(Do not take the issue of failsafe transponders lightly. In a universe where information travels at the speed of jump, enemy fleets and pirates and stolen starships and fraudulent data travels just as fast as news of invasion, and warnings that old transponder codes had been compromised, stolen, or counterfeited. Law enforcement agencies and navies hate to be behind the power curve like that, and had long dreamed of a transponder that was intrinsically *instantaneously* verifiable, rather than dependent upon some new updated codes that might be hours or days or weeks behind a suspicious vessel. The SDG-313F represented such an instantaneous, real-time solution. If the SDG or Deyo circuit boxes were tampered with in any way, they ceased to function, and were therefore "safe," i.e., could not give a fraudulent message to another transponder.)

Over time, however, the truth will out, and many people had suspicions about the true nature of the ubiquitous SDG-series transponders. Part of Rushorin's

curiosity about the possibility of intelligent silicon chips must have been based on such rumors. Nonetheless, INI continued to keep a lid on the chips as long as possible. What's the point in being an intelligence agency if you can't keep a few secrets?

So why didn't they just interdict Cymbeline so no one could ever find out about them? Cymbeline was a mere three parsecs from the Solomani border, a border which was notoriously porous (witness the shenanigans recounted in **Signal GK**). To interdict Cymbeline would have been tantamount to putting up a big neon sign: "VERY IMPORTANT SECRETS CONTAINED HERE!!! COME TRY TO STEAL THEM!!!" Therefore, INI made the decision that, although the chips would eventually become public knowledge, the best way to keep them secret was to not call attention to Cymbeline. After all, that had already kept them a secret for centuries. Of course, they could have simply nuked Cymbeline and destroyed the wild population of chips so that no one could discover them, but not even INI was that cynical during the pre-war period.

Meanwhile, research continued on the chips, with the goal of finding a way to use the chips that already were distributed in transponders throughout the Imperium and its neighbors (in non-Imperial vessels that must routinely pass in and out of the Imperium) to incapacitate potential invaders or law-breakers—see **Survival Margin** pages 71 and 74 (page 47 in **Challenge 64** and pages 66-67 in **Challenge 69**). It was only after this operation had been under way for some time that Dr. Rushorin and company visited Cymbeline in **Signal GK**.

Once Rushorin had made his discovery, he naturally wished to publish his findings in his new capacity as a member of the Imperial scientific community. But it wasn't that easy. Not only was he himself a political pawn between the hostile Imperial and Solomani governments, he had also fallen into a jurisdictional dispute between the Imperial Navy and Imperial Army intelligence arms. INI, who had jurisdiction of Cymbeline, insisted that his findings be suppressed. On the other hand, IAI, who wanted to use his knowledge to further their operations in the Arcturus and Kukulkan subsectors, had to keep him happy to ensure his cooperation. And SolSec, still attempting to track down and assassinate Rushorin, had to be put off the scent of the importance of the Cymbeline chips. In the end, a compromise was reached in which Rushorin was allowed to publish his findings, but with deliber-

ate omissions and inaccuracies incorporated into the paper. These inaccuracies included details of their reproduction and predation, as well as the way they interacted with other electronic and computerized systems. Most telling of these modifications to the paper was the assessment of the chips' intelligence as being animal-level at best, an assertion that was not refuted until after the Solomani had captured the world during the Final War.

When truth is a casualty, it is the public that suffers the consequences. The Virus was developed in the absence of public awareness and debate over the proper handling of the intelligent chips. Was their use in transponder boxes tantamount to slavery, and the breeding program the moral equivalent of eugenics and vivisection? Even within the Imperial Navy, the INI was concerned enough of the results of public knowledge of the chips' details that it even concealed their true nature during routine internal reviews—see **Survival Margin**, page 76 (**Challenge 69**, page 68). A timely, full, and complete report on the chips following their 1110 discovery would have attracted such wide attention and interest that their misuse in a weapons program might have been greatly hindered.

But given that the discovery was on the border between two rival empires, it was inevitable that secrecy would win out. SolSec's determined pursuit of Rushorin ensured that he could not be allowed to simply live a private life and publish freely. With the tremendous already existing investment in the Deyo transponder systems, plus the plans to develop further capabilities, INI and the Imperial Navy could not allow the Solomani to learn of the tremendous resource right on their own doorstep. For its part, IAI, in the person of Joachim Sanchez, completely mishandled the Rushorin defection. By allowing Rushorin to go to Cymbeline before being properly debriefed and "scrubbed" of SolSec pursuit, he opened the possibility that SolSec, in following Rushorin to Cymbeline, would become aware of whatever discoveries Rushorin made there. Once SolSec was involved in the affair, there was no way that the discovery could have entered the public domain; a security lid was inescapable. By unwittingly conspiring to ensure that the chips' true nature remained secret, SolSec and IAI were thus minor accessories to the continued unexamined development of the Virus, as noted in **Survival Margin**, page 72 (**Challenge 69**, page 64).

To be fair, even without the Solomani connection, INI would have fought to keep the discovery secret. Indeed, had Sanchez been under INI command, the chain of events just discussed could never have happened. But since IAI was independent of INI, Sanchez's decision to let Rushorin go to Cymbeline, still pursued by SolSec agents, could not be stopped in time. Now Rushorin, a major intelligence asset, could withhold further cooperation unless he was allowed to publish.

For INI, this was a major defeat. Had INI been in complete control of the Rushorin affair, it could have probably kept Rushorin quiet by offering him an important post in their artificial intelligence research program, and there would have been no paper at all. For INI, it was another perfect example of why there should only be one intelligence agency, as multiple competing agencies only multiply the chances for mistakes to be made (mentioned in **Survival Margin**, page 76, or **Challenge** 69, page 68). On the other hand, opponents of over-centralized power use the same sort of example to prove that competing agencies are advantageous: if left unchecked, agencies like INI could

have established complete control over all intelligence data, and been answerable to no one but themselves. Events like these were indelibly etched in the minds of the participants, and set the stage for back-room wars within each faction among the competing intelligence branches for access to, and control over, the factional leaders (**Survival Margin**, pages 24, 29, 32, 36, 40, 43, 47, 51, 55, 82, or TNS articles in **Challenges** 51, 53, 55, 57, 58, 63, 64, etc.).

There remains a final possibility, that the players who played **Signal GK** managed to get Rushorin killed so that he was never able to publish his findings, but this is unlikely; I would estimate that the vast majority of published adventures are played out with results broadly similar to the published plotline. However, even if this is not the case, it is no problem at all. Since his expurgated paper was sufficiently vague and inaccurate as to prevent any real public awareness or debate on the significance of the chips, the lack of such a paper would make no difference. By 1126, when the chips were visited by Joshua Dahvin, eliciting the ire of the Solomani hard-liners, they would easily have been discovered by the Solomani

forces that overran the area in 1120 (**Survival Margin**, page 50, **Challenge** 62, page 53).

So, what of PC groups that played **Signal GK** and still have Chip 10987 as a travelling companion? 10987 may be surprised, or even intrigued to find that it is related to the Virus. It may feel that it has a unique capacity to communicate with Virus-infected systems, and wish to do so. After all, chances for it to communicate with its own kind have probably been pretty rare. Could 10987 interact usefully with a Virus, perhaps convince it to work with the PCs? Or would it just get itself and the PCs' ship infected or destroyed? Perhaps it would try to merge with a Virus, and assert its sanity over the insane Virus personality, thereby rehabilitating the Virus into a useful being.

And what of the nuking of Cymbeline in 1127? 10987 would likely be outraged at this genocide visited on the other members of its race and wish justice, or revenge. Or perhaps it wants to return to Cymbeline to search for survivors. Could it or the PCs figure out who was responsible? And there's always the chance that some vampire ships have the same idea in mind...

Oh yeah, while I'm here, I would like to declare the first ever

Darlin' Dave's Renegade Challenge Contest (DDRCC)

The first person to correctly answer the following question will get a free copy of the deluxe boxed edition of **Traveller: The New Era**, completely undamaged by my autograph or anything cheesy like that.

The question is this:

(Ahem...) The brontosaurus is—excuse me.

The question is this:

Who is the lady in black on the cover of **Traveller: The New Era**?

Traveller authors (you know who you are) with whom I have already discussed the answer are not eligible for the prize. If more than one correct answer arrives on the same day, the winner will be chosen at random. Please mail your answers to:

Darlin' Dave's Renegade Challenge Contest (DDRCC)
GDW
P.O. Box 1646
Bloomington, IL 61702-1646

The winner will be announced in the first issue of **Challenge** after the blessed event, and will be notified by the arrival of **Deluxe TNE** on his or her doorstep. Beware of future DDRCCs when you least expect them.

In closing, let me just say this: The Virus is your friend.

(Or at least you'd better hope it is.)

Thank you, and good night.



Dream Park

The Roleplaying Game

R. Talsorian Games. \$18.00.

Written by Mike Pondsmith.

128-page softbound book with four pages of cardboard character and power card inserts.

Published in 1992.

Review by Craig Sheeley.

When *Dream Park* was published in the early '80s, it was a sort of literary vindication of roleplaying games. The hobby of gaming had grown to such significance that nongamers could read about it and be familiar with the concept. And now it reappears as a roleplaying game about playing roleplaying games! An elegant, if ironic, development.

The book is split into several parts. First, the background of the park is explained for those gamers who haven't read the book (and for those who have, there is an excellent overview illustration that serves as a crude map). The holographic technology of the game is explained, right down to the latest developments from the latest book. Gently, with comic-book illustration, the reader is introduced to the concept of gaming in the park.

Next is a "jump-start" section, explaining the basic rules very simply and presenting several "beginner" scenarios so that the players can jump right in and get a feel for the system. Since the system is a modified D6 version of R. Talsorian's *Interlock* system, anyone can comprehend it almost immediately.

After that, things get a bit complicated. The central feature of *Dream Park* is that the game characters in it are actually other characters playing the game. This means that the game can even be combined with other games

based in a technological setting. Is your character in *Cyberpunk* feeling a little run-down, in need of a rest? Then take off to Dream Park for a weekend (if you can afford it) and find relaxation in some video adventure, where the world around you may not be real, but sure feels like it is!

A *Dream Park* character is a small group of statistics and a collection of Game Points. These Game Points are used to customize a character for specific games, since the location, genre and reality of each game are usually different. Game Points can buy skills and equipment, which are turned back in at the end of the game to be used at the next game. Game Points, like experience points in other games, trace the development and relative power of the gamer in *Dream Park*. After all, that's what the serious gamers are there for.

Game Points can be lost as well as gained. If you lose equipment, you lose the points it cost. If you get killed during a game, you lose half your Game Point total.

The most compelling feature of *Dream Park* is that the games can range to any realm of the fantastic. The only constraints are the physical ones on the wizards of Dream Park (they can't effectively simulate an adventure that takes place in a 0G environment, for example), and the requirement that the players be able to figure out the background reality—being marooned in a place where you have no idea of the rules is a gamer's nightmare and is grounds for crying foul to the IGFS, the gamers' association that arbitrates the games and rankings.

Dream Park is an attractive, very glossy product. It's easy to play the basic game, and the fundamental concepts are swiftly grasped. The advanced character generation is a bit complex, but that's only if you're playing a magic user, cleric, psionic or superhero (they have a lot of specialized skills to buy). Personally, I don't like the concept of "character classes," but they existed in the first *Dream Park* book, and here they serve only as skill limits—you can buy any skill, but it costs a lot more if it's specialized to a different character class.

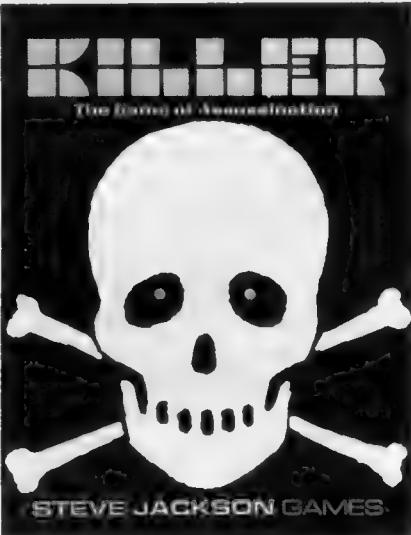
I felt sorry for the designer of this game. If this game had been made some years earlier, he could have done it very easily, based solely on the first book. However, this was not the case; he had to take the other two books in the *Dream Park* series into account. This meant attempting to reconcile discrepancies and changes between the books—fiction authors would do well to take a hint from games and establish

guidelines to prevent such literary *non sequiturs*.

For instance, one or both of the *Dream Park* authors fell in love with the idea of "virtual reality" glasses of the sort used in gunfight games in California today. Despite the fact that this form of accessory fit into the basic *Dream Park* premise as well as lips on a chicken, the glasses were grafted into the storyline of the latest book, and Mike Pondsmith had to account for them in the game.

These same discrepancies between books also account for the magic system in this game, which bears absolutely no resemblance to the simple and effective one in the first novel. Gamers picking up *Dream Park* and expecting things to work the way they did in the first (and best) novel are in for a sorry surprise. A pity.

Dream Park is a good concept, and well-executed. Gamers desiring different game realities, new challenges and little chance of permanent character death will love it. I look forward to the adventures.



Killer

The Game of Assassination

Steve Jackson Games, Inc. \$12.95.

Written by Steve Jackson.

64-page book with rules on how to play *Killer*.

Third edition published in 1992.

Review by Craig Sheeley.

"Bang, you're dead! Gotta fall down!" "Am not!" "Are too!" "Am not!" "Are too!"

Remember those arguments from your childhood? And remember the light-hearted fun you used to have running around in your favorite playgrounds (your yard, your neighbor's yards, etc.), plastic gun clutched tightly in hand, waiting to catch sight of one of the other players

and shoot him down? (The really cool players had exaggerated death scenes.) *Killer* is about that sort of enjoyment, although it has rules (the young seem to get along without rules—the “adults” are the ones who insist on them).

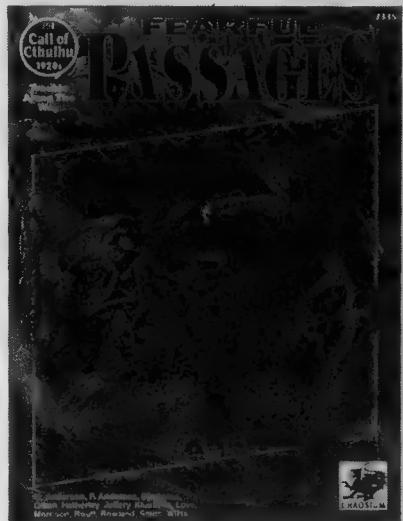
For the benefit of those still living in caves on distant Pacific islands, *Killer* is a game of kill-your-buddy. In it, the contestants are assigned victims from among each other, so that each contestant is a victim as well as a hunter. Then the players hunt each other; when a player successfully “kills” his prey, he is assigned another target from among the remaining players. This goes on until only one is left.

This book is full of variations on this basic theme. It includes an overview of acceptable weapons and tactics, with safety in mind, describes various bombs and similar gags, gives capsule outlines of game styles (team play, the “vampire” game, the Borgias game, Chicago 1920s, etc.), and it even has a scholarly afterward, examining some of the folklore of the game.

Killer has been out of print for some time, and it's good to see it back in print. The game has always been popular, and Steve Jackson's rules are a good benchmark for how to have a safe and relatively trouble-free game. I particularly appreciate the calm, common-sense advice, the emphasis on *Killer* as a game of thoughtful, sneaky assassi-

nation (instead of a bunch of adults regressing to obnoxious pseudo-childhood; sure, that's fun, but it also disturbs the daylights out of those around you), and the section on *Killer* at conventions.

If you play referee *Killer* or one of its variants, you might think about picking this book up and adding it to your library.



Fearful Passages

Chaosium Inc. \$18.95.

128-page softbound scenario supplement for *Call of Cthulhu*.

Published in 1992.

Review by Craig Sheeley.

For a time in the early part of this century, traveling the trip was more important than the destination. Surface travel was as luxurious as it could be, and air travel was really in its infancy, except for dirigible transport—and the Germans made it luxurious, too (remember the dirigible scenes from *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*?).

This set of unconnected scenarios revolves around the ideas of making investigators' trips interesting, heh, heh. That is to say, terrifying and possibly life-threatening. All the scenarios revolve around modes of transport, ranging from the mundane to the exotic. They're broken up into three sections:

The first section deals with the normal, everyday transports—planes, trains and automobiles. This first section is easy to place into the middle of an adventure; the investigators need to go somewhere and get into the car/train/plane, and presto! They're in the middle of a scenario.

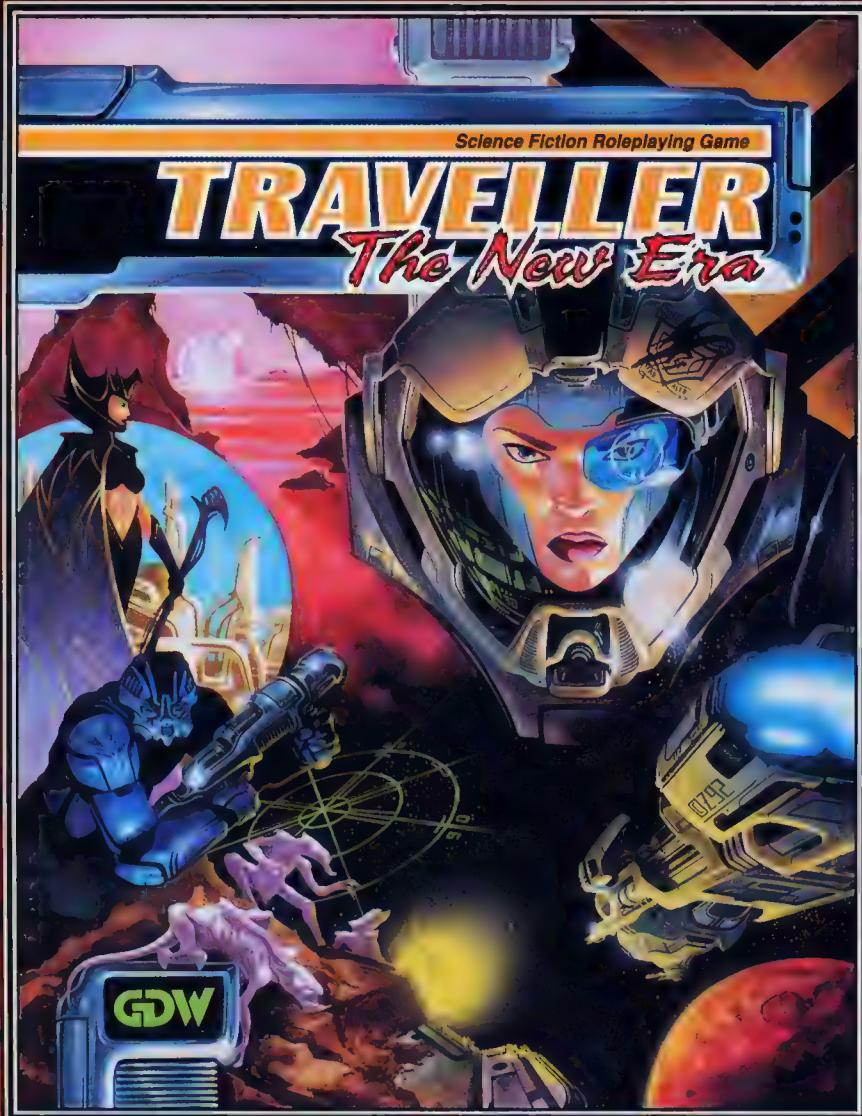
The second section places the investigators in airship, diving suits and English canal boats. Working the scenarios into the proceedings is somewhat more difficult, since all three scenarios are expeditions of one sort or another.

The last three adventures are quite exotic, involving armored cars, elephants and arctic sledges. These will require special attention to work into the flow of a campaign.

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